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ABSTRACT

A study conducted by the copy editor of a small daily newspaper in Porter County, Indiana examines readers' motivations for writing letters to the editor. Analysis was based on letters that appeared in "The Vidette Messenger" September 16-30, 1992. Of 75 letters, 32 were responses to information published in the paper during the last 2 weeks. All but one of these addressed local issues. These letters concerned four basic topics: the family, the environment, money matters, and corrections of newspaper errors. The family-oriented opinions, the most often addressed topic, were responses to four articles. These articles concerned a cat leash law under debate in the community, a poor single-parent family, abortion, and family size and overpopulation. Five of seven letters written about the environment were responses to letters written by other readers. Five of seven letters written about money matters discussed the potential use of a County Option Income Tax; two concerned housing and health care. From this sampling, 25 letters (43.9%) were not responses to readings. These fell into two categories: letters dealing with the upcoming presidential election and informational and persuasive letters. Of all opinions published within the 15-day period, 76% were written by non-paid and non-professional authors. The study showed that letters to the editor tend to address local, personal concerns. Newspapers, which must compete in a marketplace increasingly dominated by electronic media, should take note that readers have the strongest response to local issues that affect them personally. (A graph and a table of data are included; attached appendix contains newspaper articles and sample letters.) (SAM)

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Letters to the Editor:
Public Writing as a Response to Reading

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Education L530

Indiana University

January, 1993

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Letters to the Editor: Public Writing as a Response to Reading

The Question:

A quality newspaper's opinion page can be its crown jewel -- a lively forum for the exchange of thoughts, barbs and exhortation. In my job as copy editor of a small, daily paper, I read several newspapers in which it is that jewel each day, and am exposed to a wide variety of editorials and letters to the editor as a result.

Seeing this spectrum of opinions, I began to wonder what provokes readers, who are not paid, to set their ideas on paper and submit them to be shared in such a public manner -- thus exposing themselves to conflict. Are these writings motivated by text that has been read in the paper, or something else? If reading does provoke opinion writing, what kinds of topics are most provocative?

I have attempted to answer these questions, at least for the opinion page of The Vidette-Messenger (The V-M) of Porter County, with the following data collection and analysis.

The Application:

I began my quest for the source of opinion writing by collecting all locally-written editorials and letters to the editor which were printed in The V-M (a suburban, daily paper with a ciruclation of about 15,000) during a 15-day period, Sept. 16-30, 1992. I chose 15 days because it was long enough to provide sufficient data to analyze, but not so long as to make analysis unwieldy. Although I collected both reader and staff opinions to

provide a point of comparison and contrast, this study is focused on the reader opinions.

After marking the opinion pages with the date of printing, I divided them into four categories based on the type of author. Each piece was then marked with one of the following category codes:

R - Reader-written letters to the editor.

E - Occasional editorials written by a staff editor.

VM - Almost daily editorials written by The V-M managing editor to represent the official newspaper stance on specific issues.

S - Special editorials written by guest writers who are not necessarily employed or endorsed by The V-M.

The divided-by-authorship pieces were further separated by determining which opinions in each category were responses to something read in The V-M and which were not. The determination a piece was a response was based on either direct reference to something read or indirect reference to articles identified by monitoring several previous weeks of newspapers.

Both types of opinions in the four categories were then subjected to quantitative analysis, such as frequency per day, average number per day and percentage of non-reading and reading-responsive.

Qualitative assessments were made in all categories, with special attention given to the reader-written letters which were responses to newspaper reading. The responsive letters were paired with the specific article, column or other editorial that sparked the writing for further analysis.

Specific qualitative assessment focused on the type of subject the original reading and responsive writing were about.

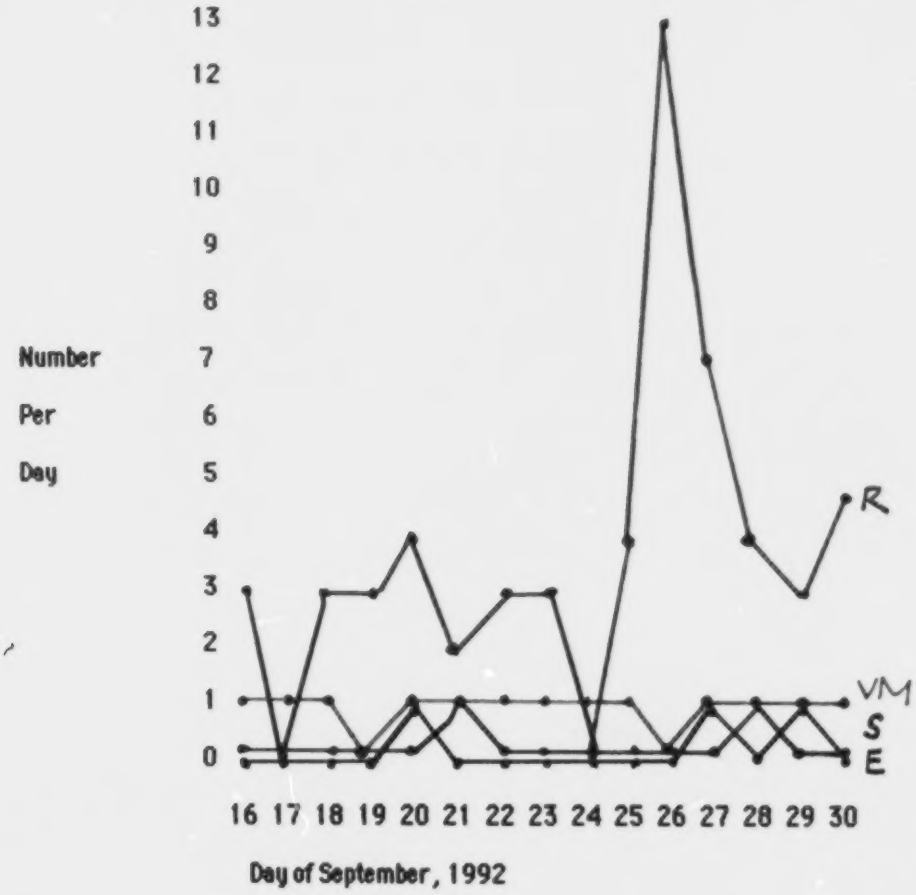
Conclusions about why opinion pieces are written, and what kind of reading and issues can provoke them were then made.

The Evidence:

Quantitative Assessments:

There were 75 locally-written opinions published in the 15-day period. Fifty-seven (76 percent) were category R; three (4 percent), category E; 13 (17.3 percent), category VM and two (2.7 percent), category S.

Daily publishing totals ranged from one to 13 items per day, with an average of five items per day. In category R, daily publishing totals ranged from zero to 13 per day, with an average of four per day. Categories E, VM and S ranged from zero to one item per day. See the following graph.



Once the four authorship categories were separated into reading-responsive and non-responsive divisions, it was found the VM category had the highest percentage of reading-responsive entries, with 13 (100 percent). The R category followed with 32 (56.1 percent) reading-responsive; the S category had one (50 percent); and the E category had one, (33.3 percent). Overall, 62.7 percent of the opinions in all four categories were responses to reading. See the following table for a complete record of reading- and non-reading-responsive opinions.

Category	R	E	VM	S	total
Number response to reading	32	1	13	1	47
Percentage response to reading	56.1	33.3	100	62.7	62.7
Number non-response to reading	25	2	0	1	28
Percentage non-response to reading	43.9	66	0	50	37.3

In category R, reading-responsive entries, I also charted the time lapse between the date the provocative writing was printed and the written response was published. While it would be difficult to reach any conclusions with this data, because space limitations sometimes force letters to be

held, all except three of the 32 responses were printed within two weeks of the provocative reading. One response was published only two days after its inspiring reading.

Qualitative Assessments:

Category R, Reading-Responsive-

I found category R opinions that were reading responsive (Rrr) to be the most interesting entries to analyze as writing as a response to reading. They were that in the purest form. While other categories had reading-responsive entries, only in the R category were they all written by non-paid, non-professional authors.

While all except one of the Rrr letters were written about local issues, they were able to be further separated into four topics -- the family (Rrr-f), the environment (Rrr-e), money matters (Rrr-m) and correction (Rrr-c). The family group was by far the most popular subject, amounting to 17 entries (53.1 percent) of the total. Environment and money tied at seven entries (21.9 percent) each, leaving correction at one entry (3.1 percent).

Family (Rrr-f): The family opinions were responses to only four written articles. One article, and its accompanying Street Beat opinion poll, about the Valparaiso City Council passing an ordinance that requires cats to be leashed solicited 13 responses (76.5 percent of the total family entries). (Cats were included in the family category under the premise they are members of the household.)

The cat leash ordinance issue came about shortly after the City Council established a similar ruling for dogs. Angry dog owners and home owners wanted marauding felines included in the restrictions. The reader opinions which followed a series of newspapers articles on the subject were

overwhelming, being the most popular opinion subject in any employee's memory.

Of the responses that were printed within the Sept. 16-30 time range, six were against the ordinance and seven were for it.

Reasons for being against the plan ranged from it being against nature, "God intended cats to be predators, to help preserve nature's balance, not to be a furball sitting at the end of a leash, meowing," Rick Leib. To inconvenience, "How can an 80-year-old person, who has been able to simply let a cat in and out be expected to take their cat out on a leash," Norma Kent. To unenforceability, "The council and other citizens should propose a more realistic ordinance, such as requiring cats to wear a collar with a bell to warn victims," Karen Kent. To danger, "An older cat, who has not been leashed before, will end up choking itself." Norma Kent. To being against the American Constitution, "The Constitution gives cats the right of wild animals not to be leashed," Iver Clouse.

Reasons for supporting the ordinance were equally varied, ranging from supporting property rights, "Leash them, fence them or keep them in your house, but please, get them out of our yard," Eltaine P. Krodel. To bird safety, "I also find by back yard full of dead birds which we used to feed," Shirley Bober. To garden integrity, "I know a cat dug up a very pretty, small garden by our patio," Gladys Iden. To safety, "If you love your cat, you will keep it safe," Mrs. Arthur Watt.

Three other family issues -- autonomy, abortion and size also prompted one written response each. The autonomy response was to a story about a financially-strapped mother profiled in The VM because of her difficulty in finding housing. After the story appeared, the state Department of Welfare

removed her two children from the mother's custody and another story was written.

One reader responded to the second story by comparing the ability of the Welfare Department to tear apart a family to the destructive power of Hurricane Andrew. She further stated having a home should not be a criterion for getting to keep one's children.

The abortion opinion was a response to a special editorial, from outside the time period studied, about the local hospital, which is building a medical-surgical center expansion, even though a competing hospital is building a similar facility, literally down the street.

The reader responded to the editorial, which supported the expansion on the basis of economics, on an ethical note. She claimed the local hospital is having to compete with out-of-town centers (all Catholic in this case) because it performs abortions, not because it does not have adequate facilities and marketing.

Another response was an endorsement of a support service for handicapped children. The reader, the director of the program's sponsoring organization, commended both the article and the program.

A last opinion responded to a story about local environmental activists going to Washington, D.C. to talk about several subjects, including family size and world overpopulation. The reader contends the article is correct in its premise the world only has room for so many people, and introduces supplementary information to support that view.

To see the actual articles and responses in the Rrr-f category, see Appendix A.

Environment (Rrr-e): The environment was also a hot issue in reading-responsive category R opinions. A set of five of the seven environmental letters are especially interesting because they do not respond to anything written by The VM or Associated Press staffs, but to letters written by other readers.

At issue in the series of letters is the controversial Dunes Expansion Bill, which passed in October, 1992 after four years of political wrangling and similar letter writing. The bill was a source of conflict because its original version required the purchase of several pieces of private land, to be included in the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Angry home owners formed an organization to fight the bill.

The letters printed within the Sept. 16-30 time period, directly before the passage of the bill, contain personal attacks, defensive tactics and supplementary information. Of all the category opinions, these contain the most inflamatory language, calling opponents, "hysterical," "commercial" and "scam" perpetrators.

Other environmental opinions center around preservation and pollution. Both are written by Joanna Waugh, a frequent contributor to anti-environmental issues who is also mentioned in the preceding series. One letter counters a special editorial (which is also included in category S) that claimed the nation had made a mistake in not doing more at the Earth Summit. The reader contends the country has developed its resources, and has technology that is worth some environmental loss. This editorial and response are also worthy of note in it is the only non-local issue to provoke a response.

"Mr. Wolf's (special editorial writer) column implies we have squandered our inheritance. On the contrary, man has wisely invested nature's gifts," she states.

Her other letter responds to an Associated Press story about the rising mercury level in Great Lakes fish, as studied by an environmental organization. Waugh claims the environmental group is too obscure to warrant such an article, and counters its figures with other data.

For copies of the Rrr-e articles and responses, see Appendix B.

Money Matters (Rrr-m): Also high on the reader-response chart were letters to the editor written about money. Of the seven financial responses, five were written about one issue -- the potential utilization of a County Option Income Tax (COIT).

Porter County, like many Indiana governmental units, has been strapped for funds as federal resources have been drying up. Some county officials are interested in establishing a COIT to balance out revenues and expenditures. Some county officials claimed without a COIT, programs like 4-H and Enhanced 911 emergency phone service would have to be scrapped. Other officials, prior to elections, said the budget can be trimmed of fat, without cutting out meat -- thus avoiding the need for a new tax.

The letters were responding to a series of articles that do not directly refer to the COIT, but the budget issues behind the idea.

Three of the letters support the COIT as a possible option to help ease the budget crunch, although two of the letters, those of County Council President Karen Hughes and Gerie Baker are guarded in that support. Charles Soltis is to the point about his feelings on the subject, with an opening line

of, "Porter County definitely needs an option income tax of one percent or less."

The two letters against the tax claim the county already has too much tax base to work with and is being irresponsible with what it does have.

The other money matter issues, soliciting one response each, concern housing and health care. The housing issue revolved around affordable home construction (in the $75,000 to $90,000 range) in Valparaiso, an affluent suburb. In conflict is a city-sponsored development of 14 such homes on the city's west side. Neighborhood residents claim the homes would ruin their drainage, drag down their property values and destroy a natural area that is integral to their quality of life. The city contends the homes will be high quality houses and will fit in with the neighborhood, while meeting an economic need.

The only response that fell in the Sept. 16-30 time period is representative of many that were published. The readers state the city has been deceitful and is trying to expand the property involved and the number of homes. The readers, a husband and wife, further cast doubt as to the true motive of the officials who are backing the project.

The health care response followed a special editorial from outside the sample time period, which again takes up the issue of the two medical-surgical centers being built down the street from each other. But, instead of responding to the issue from the viewpoint of abortion, this reader contends cost is the real matter in health care. He agrees and disagrees with the special editorial point-by-point to come to the conclusion although costs need to be lowered, government control would only foul the health care system more., the polar opposite view of the special editorial.

See Appendix C for copies of the Rrr-m writings and responses.

Correction (Rrr-c): The last of the reader responses was to an article written about the Popcorn Festival Parade, a yearly Valparaiso event which pays homage to local popcorn-farmer-turned-snack-king Orville Redenbacher.

The reader took offense at the reporter's chronicle of cheerleaders' part in the parade. The reporter said they chose to ride out the parade instead of walking like everyone else. The reader said some not only walked, but did gymnastics, cheered and sang their school song.

See Appendix D for the Rrr-c entry and the parade story.

Category R, Non-Responsive-

In spite of the large number of letters to the editor which were responses to reading, 25 (43.9 percent) were not. While these non-responsive articles are interesting, they are not the focus of this study and will only be briefly discussed.

Non-responsive letters (Rnr) basically fell into two categories -- those concerning the November, 1992 election, (Rnr-e), and those which were informational or persuasive (Rnr-i).

It is difficult to tell what provoked the election articles, but several seem to be the result of a personal experience with government.

The 15 election letters range in subject from why to vote, to whom to vote for, to which issues are and are not important. The informational and persuasive letters cover a wide range of topics, including abortion, private phone companies, education, cable television, religion, animal abuse, the commercialization of Christmas, driving rules and prison escapes.

Eight of the Rnr-i category letters were written in response to personal experiences, one was a response to an all-art cartoon in The VM and one was a musing about religious intolerance.

See Appendix E for copies of the Rnr letters.

Category E -

Of the three editorials written by The V-M staff, only one was a response to something read in the paper. City Editor Jeff Mayes responded to an article about fishing access at a lake in the Valparaiso area.

A group of homeowners around the lake is trying to block public access to Flint Lake, much to local anglers' and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources' chagrin.

Mayes listed what the homeowners have done to block access, essentially accusing them of blatant selfishness. He further criticized the DNR for being wimpy in the face of homeowner anger, and not really doing anything to accomplish the public access goal. He put the responsibility for action on the county, calling on it to condemn land to create a county beach, which would allow public access and pull the legal rug out from under homeowners.

The other two E category editorials are written by Managing Editor Pasquale Rocchio as part of an informational series about the inner workings of The V-M.

Rocchio directly tells readers about how a newly-formed reader board is going and how the local election will be covered in the newspaper.

For copies of category E editorials, see Appendix F. Because these editorials are only a point of contrast, not the focus of this study, the article which provoked the reading-responsive opinion is not included in the appendix.

Category VM -

The almost-daily editorials in category VM are 100 percent reading responsive -- as they are intended to be. Rocchio writes the editorials each morning, usually responding to or putting an opinion spin on something in that afternoon's newspaper.

Opinions in this category cover such topics as voter registration, nearby military bases, the controversial cat leash ordinance, a zoning decision and Flint Lake access.

All of the issues are local, again, as they are intended to be.

Copies of the category VM editorials appear in Appendix G. Because the category is included for contrast to reader-written letters, and is not the focus of the study, copies of the articles which provoked the opinions are not included in the appendix.

Category S -

Category S opinions, both written by a guest columnist, were interesting in that one of the two entries also provoked a reader-written letter to the editor.

Columnist John Wolf's condemnation of the United States' inactivity at the Earth Summit, provoked a Rrr-e response about environmentalism in general.

Wolf wrote another editorial which was a response to an newspaper story concerning poverty, citing figures in a much earlier article about the growing number of Porter County poor.

His editorials appear in Appendix H. Because category S entries are a point of contrast, not the focus of this study, the article that provoked the reading response is not included in the appendix.

Analysis:

In analyzing the data points collected in this study of newspaper-published opinions and their source, the numbers speak for themselves.

I find it interesting that 76 percent of all the opinions published within the 15-day period were written by non-paid, non-professional authors. This large percentage indicates writing for publication is a need many writers feel, even if it means putting themselves at risk on an opinion page.

The strong need to be published as adults mirrors education author Joyce Armstrong Carroll's article, "Publishing: The Writer's Touchdown," which focuses on beginning, student writers.

"Publishing matters because it is the writer's solo flight, winning basket, birdie; it is the writer's curtain call, recital, aria; it is the writer's exhibit, premier, trophy; it is the writer's touchdown," Carroll wrote.

These reader-written opinions are also interesting because more than half (56.1 percent) were responses to something read in The V-M. This high number is an indication reading can be, and is even likely to be, a source of provocation for public writing.

Even in the staff (categories E and VM) and special (category S) editorials, reading material is often the inspiration for writing (ranging from 33.3 to 100 percent of category opinions). These figures, adding up to 62.7 percent across all categories, might indicate that regardless of the writing experience of the author, reading can significantly influence his or her work.

The numbers in this study might also indicate a definite pattern in what types of reading inspire writing. In category R, there was a clear trend toward writing about subjects that hit closest to home -- literally.

Most of the responses concerned the individuals, including cats, who actually live within the home. Even responses that fell outside the confines of home were extremely personal -- money, and the environment, including its impact on personal health and quality of life.

The tendency to focus writing on personal issues was also seen in the non-reading-responsive letters to the editor. The bulk of them centered on either personal experiences with government, and their reflection on much larger world issues, or sharing information about personal life knowledge.

Even in staff and special editorials, the trend is toward writing about extremely local issues -- like fishing access and the cat leash ordinance rather than larger ones -- like world peace, world hunger or global environmentalism.

The personal pattern seen in adult newspaper opinion writers is also seen in children according to research summarized by Norma Decker Collins in Education L530 Indiana University study guide, Writing as a Response to Reading. Her summary of research done by Donald Graves in 1983 indicates he found young writers who choose topics of personal interest will begin and complete their writing more efficiently than those who are not interested in the subject.

Conclusions:

Regardless of their level of writing expertise, authors are influenced by what they read -- with that reading sometimes becoming the provocation to write.

The intimate craft of writing might be most influenced by reading when that material concerns something near and dear to the author.

If further research indicates these reading/writing trends hold true in a wide variety of mass media, they should be viewed by various industries and institutions as literary tools.

For newspapers, which must compete in a marketplace increasingly dominated by electronic media, it would be wise to see readers are indicating they are paying closer attention to the issues which affect them most personally. Perhaps newspapers should respond by tailoring and localizing coverage to individuals, not the masses.

For schools and adult literacy programs, it might be beneficial to respond to the trend of provocative reading by using personal issues and memories and inspiring reading as instigators of writing.

For writers in general, it may mean extra attention should be spent making sure the work is good. Who knows what it might start?

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Appendix A

Rrr-f
cats

Cats fit to be tied

9/14/92

by Phil Potempta
The Vidette-Messenger

VALPARAISO — The cat fight is over and the cats lost.

The City Council voted five to one Friday to require cats be leashed.

The council amended an ordinance passed last month requiring dogs to be leashed. Language eliminating cats from control brought protest.

"According to City Hall's unofficial telephone poll, we received about 80 calls. About half a dozen were against the cat leash law, the rest were in favor," Mayor David Butterfield said.

"But most of the people who called thought City Hall should get on to more important issues."

Council member Don Larr was the dissenter.

"I have a grandson who was once threatened by a dog and a neighbor who was bitten seven times by a dog. Dogs running loose are dangerous, however cats remain more of a nuisance."

His wife, Katie, also spoke against the plan.

"I spoke with a local veterinarian and it was his strong opinion that it's next to impossible to contain a cat. They're too cunning for collars."

Donna Smith, Porter County Animal Shelter director, presented figures on roaming animals.

Reading from 1992 lost and found logs, she said 43 dogs were reported lost and 29 were found; 45 cats were reported and 13 were found. Police brought in another 12 dead cats.

"The police are always being bothered with reports of cat fights. Wake up world! Most of these cats aren't fighting, they're making more cats," Smith said.

Smith supports the amendment. She said cats are at greater risk to carry rabies, have more litters of offspring and upset senior citizens by killing birds.

They also upset council member Tony Schultz.

"I like birds. I have five bird feeders and I'm tired of picking up pieces of birds all over my yard because of cats."

STREET BEAT

9/19/92

"What do you think of a proposed ordinance of the Valparaiso City Council that would force cat owners to put their cats on leashes?"

by Cliston Brown
Asked at Wal-Mart

19

Err-f
cats

R-9/26/92

Last week's Street Beat question was "What do you think of the Valparaiso City Council ordinance forcing cat owners to put their cats on leashes?

It's the most lame-brained idea I've heard of. God intended cats to be predators, to help preserve nature's balance, not to be a furball setting at the end of a leash meowing.

What will happen in a few years down the road when mice, rats, pigeons, rabbits, and all the other little mammals, become a nuisance? Pass a leash law for them as well?

Do you think the city council needs to contact the African government, and suggest to them, they should pass a leash law for their big cats? Preventing them from killing their birds and other wildlife, and to prevent them from disturbing their elderly?

The question I have is, how come these council members are paying more attention to cats, instead of trying to find ways to help the homeless, unemployed, and the working poor, or the many other important issues which need their attention? If this is all they can think to do with their time, and our money, shouldn't we be getting new city council members?

Let's address the important issues, not the stupid ones.

RICK LEIB
Valparaiso

As a past dog owner, my dogs never ran loose or went into neighbors yards. Cat owners should contain their cats to their property and abide by the same laws as dog owners. I presently do not own either, but I have to clean up my yard of cat waste and I also find my back yard full of dead birds that we used to feed.

SHIRLEY BOBER
Valparaiso

In order to protect the birds, your cat should be declawed, and in order to save the abundance of kittens that come to an end of suffering and starvation, your pets should be neutered. Otherwise cats should be on leashes.

GLADYS M. MAXWELL
Valparaiso

Cats should be on a leash the same as dogs. I know a cat dug up a very pretty small garden back by our patio. They may be small but they can cause a lot of harm. They can carry disease.

Also people should not let their dog do their business in other people's yards. I do not want my front yard dirtied up by cats or dogs.

GLADIS IDEN
Valparaiso

Cats never should be allowed to roam freely. Millions of birds are lost because of this careless act. With loss of habitat and poisons, birds are having a hard time surviving.

Birds control insect population plus other numerous benefits. Without them life on earth would die, wake up people.

HARRY W. MOEHL
Valparaiso

We have had several cats — mostly temperamental Siamese. All of our cats were trained to a leash and traveled with us to Washington D.C., Pennsylvania, Colorado and other places.

Cats can be as destructive or more so than dogs. Especially when it comes to gardens. If you love your cat you will leash it and keep it safe.

MRS. ARTHUR WATT
Valparaiso

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Rrr-f
cats

We have cats, dog, horses and none are allowed to roam at will. But they can and do escape once in awhile — especially cats. It's an unenforceable law and a waste of time.

A cat on a leash is at risk of being hurt far more easily than a dog. Our dog will kill a bird if he can — our cats are too lazy.

Why can't people live together and respect each others pleasures? Cats aren't near as bad as people portray them. They really are part of natures balance. Many times it's chipmunks that destroy flower beds, not cats.

JACKIE PATENO
Valparaiso

Our neighborhood has a problem with rabbits. Now that leashed cats will no longer be able to provide some control to the rabbit population, we will likely witness an unwanted increase in the rabbit population.

Perhaps the city council should now vote to include rabbits in the leash ordinance.

GARY SATKAMP
Valparaiso

Since it has become necessary, we are for the required leashing of cats as well as dogs.

Every day from four to eight different cats visit our yard. About six of these wear collars, two appear to be strays.

Apparently they have all decided they are invited to a feast-table of birds under our feeder, as well as having chosen our yard as the "Tabby Toilet" of choice in our neighborhood.

Pets deserve responsible owners who will love them enough to feed them, protect them and not allow them to incur the wrath of their neighbors.

Leash them, fence them or keep them in your house but please, get them out of our yard.

ELTAINE P. KRODEL
Valparaiso

It is out of reason to expect a cat to be leashed.

An older cat, who has not been leashed before, will end up choking itself from trying to pull its way out of a leash.

Pets are wonderful for older people. How can an 80-year-old person, who has been able to simply let a cat in and out, be expected to take their cat out on a leash?

If a cat is tied in a yard, it may end up being attacked by a stray dog or one who got loose from its chain.

Mother Nature intended cats to be hunters of mice and rodents, even if they might not eat them. Their desire to keep that end of the population down is only natural.

Let's be reasonable and keep them off the leashes, but get them neutered and spayed, which is much more important. Also, keep the cats in the house at bedtime.

NORMA E. KENT
Valparaiso

It's about time. The law should be called "confinement law." Cats should stay on their owners' property. We have about 10 cats in our block. It seems when people turn on their lights at night, they push their cats out to roam all night.

It isn't fair.

VIOLET J. OLIVER
Valparaiso

The City Council should have read the Constitution before approving the cat leash law. The Constitution gives cats the right of wild animals not to be leashed. Read it. The council might get sued. It's not my opinion; it's the law.

IVER CLOUSE
Portage

The ordinance is absurd. It goes against nature to leash a cat. Have any of the members of the City Council tried it? As for the comment about cats carrying rabies, responsible pet owners vaccinate their cats. The strays, which still will be unleashed, are more apt to have rabies. Cats help keep the rabid rodent population down.

The council and other citizens should propose a more realistic and productive ordinance, such as requiring cats to wear a collar with a bell to warn potential victims like rabbits and birds.

Cats don't roam like dogs. Cats are territorial animals. They don't wander far from the hand that feeds them.

KAREN KENT
Valparaiso

Unlucky or dangerous?

R- 8/24/92

by Sally Vornhagen
The Vidette-Messenger

- After a Sunday Vidette-Messenger story about her search for a home, Carol Blunk's children were taken by state welfare department workers. She said it's over the story. They say the children were in danger.

SOUTH HAVEN — In a move possibly motivated by an Aug. 23 Vidette-Messenger story, state welfare workers seized a woman's children and placed them in foster care.

Sunday's article stated Carol Blunk and her two children faced the possibility of being homeless by Sept 1. because of financial difficulties.

Monday, at about 11 a.m., a Division of Child and Family Services worker and two county sheriff's deputies arrived at Blunk's South Haven home, she said, telling her to pack a bag for the kids, ages 2 and 3.

They were taken screaming and crying from their mother, who was given notice of an Aug. 28 court date, she said.

The worker, who'd visited Blunk Friday to offer assistance in finding a place to live, told her the children were being removed because the newspaper story said they would be homeless, Blunk said.

The Porter County Division of Child and Family Services refused to comment.

Rich Schneider, with the Department of Public Welfare in Indianapolis, said, "I can't discuss reasons for removal because we want to protect the privacy of the family."

However, Tim Elliott, also with that department, said, "In an emergency situation, we don't need to obtain a court order if we believe the children's lives are in danger."

The county Sheriff's Department confirmed it assists social services in removing children suspected of being abused and a court order is not necessary in an emergency.

Blunk said the worker accused her of abusing her son.

The child has been under psychiatric treatment since he accidentally drank kerosene several months ago, Blunk said.

"They were saying I forced it down his throat. But, when it happened, I called social services myself to talk about his emotional problems.

"His doctor says he does have emotional problems, and I've been doing everything I can to make sure he gets treatment."

Andrew not only destructive force

As I watch and hear of the travesties of Hurricane Andrew I am thankful I do not live in the path of its destruction.

I cannot comprehend how the survivers must feel to loose one's earthly possessions, home and possibly the lives of loved ones by such a monster in a split second.

As I read about another monster destroying a home I am not so thankful to live in Porter County. This monster did not leave a path of torn apart buildings that can be rebuilt. This monster, the state Department of Public Welfare, tore apart a family.

The monster preyed upon a struggling, single mother who was brave enough to publicly voice her fear that one day she may find herself and two children homeless.

A lesson learned from Hurricane Andrew is we are only a puff of wind away from being homeless. Not the amount of our income nor the value of our home will save us.

If such an event should happen in Porter County, would we lose only our homes or would the welfare department also take our children from us because we are homeless?

DONETTA LEMAY
Valparaiso

R- 9/16/92

Attorney
Gen-J

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S-9/9/92

PMH must protect patient base

DR. KENNETH BLACK
My Opinion

Being a physician in Porter County over the past 16 years has been rewarding, demanding and, I am finding, frustrating.

There is a debate in the newspaper over the appropriateness of Porter Memorial Hospital's building a medical-surgical center. In a broader sense, this is a debate on healthcare costs and the autonomy of an institution to control its own destiny.

Like everyone else, I am affected by increasing healthcare costs. Patients can no longer afford healthcare, because of increasing insurance rates, and the presence of a larger body of individuals (including institutions and businesses) concerned about the healthcare dollar.

As an individual, I understand that perspective. However, we have been bombarded recently with the phrase "Buy American." There are two reasons for this in dealing with imports:

- Loss of jobs
- Loss of capital or the ability of American industry to afford technological improvements, which may be more pervasive and of concern.

In medicine, as in the auto industry, if capital is lost, the ability for technological improvement is diminished. Most Porter County patients are affected by PMH because many will choose PMH for their healthcare.

My family has utilized PMH and, I am affected (directly and indirectly) by healthcare rates. My concern is if PMH does not remain competitive, it cannot maintain the services of physicians, nurses, and healthcare professionals (i.e. x-ray techs, lab phlebotomists)

These individuals will no longer be able to provide care for patients in Porter County and we could see the death of an institution. If PMH gives up the ability to be competitive and make money to improve technology for their citizens, PMH like the American auto corporations, may become a dying breed.

PMH is not the invader in the present situation. The purpose of St. Anthony's, and other institutions in moving into Porter County, is to provide healthcare and export that income back to their institution to provide technological advances for the ability to survive, not just to provide healthcare in Porter County.

I would challenge any of these institutions to state any money made in Porter County would remain in Porter County. Some of my concerns in this competition would be lessened if any income from the new facilities built by St. Anthony's and partners were to remain here.

However, I do not foresee this. The reason why they're reaching to new market places is to obtain more capital. Even if they were to allow Porter County funds to remain in Porter County, this would be at the distinct diminishment of funds available to PMH.

If we look at our county as our patient base, had PMH elected to go into a partnership with St. Anthony's at its new facility, PMH would probably have lost (at least at the time partnership was offered) 66 percent of the profits to St. Anthony's — and now to other hospital corporations.

Initially there was talk of a 50/50 split. Even in that scenario, 50 percent of the monies which could have gone to PMH would be leaving the county. I do not find this acceptable.

Porter County's industry is forgetting their patients may use St. Anthony's new facility, but ambulances probably will bypass this for a hospital setting. If a life-threatening situation occurs at those facilities, the patients will be transferred to PMH.

Therefore, if PMH is left in a position where it cannot purchase equipment to maintain its competitiveness, physicians will no longer seek to attend this facility, nurses will no longer administer their skills at this facility, and PMH will become a has-been facility.

Why didn't PMH seek approval of Porter County industries? I understand how healthcare costs affect industry in my practice as well. However, did St. Anthony's approach the local industry about coming into the area? Did St. Anthony's make industry aware their average daily cost, even with severity index adjusted, has been more expensive than PMH? Did St. Anthony's make industry aware this would decrease profits for the local facility and therefore potentially decrease the ability of Porter County patients to receive adequate and appropriate healthcare?

Another concern of mine relates to autonomy and control. PMH is controlled by local residents and a Porter County-based board. St. Anthony's is controlled by out-of-county individuals and a board whose first interest is not Porter County.

The Constitution gave us a federal government as well as a local government with the thought some situations could, and should, be controlled locally. We have more influence on healthcare matters in Porter County in dealing with the local hospital than in dealing with a hospital in another county.

The arguments recently addressed have painted PMH as the villain. PMH over the years has been known around the state to attempt to control healthcare costs and keep them at a more bearable cost structure than other institutions or counties. Indeed many out-of-county individuals come to PMH because they prefer this concept.

I am frustrated because the debate and perspective on this healthcare decision has not truly looked at who the victim is. Who is trying to sustain their institution for the benefit of local Porter County residents rather than expand the profit base of a Lake County hospital, taking those dollars elsewhere and leaving the local residents with less ability to maintain low cost and receive modern healthcare?

If we play out this scenario, eventually we will have the death of our hospital and the loss of control of our destiny. Is that what we really desire and would that not be a nightmare?

(Black, a family practitioner, is chief of staff at Porter Memorial Hospital)

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krr-f
abortion

Abortions drive patients away

Dr. Kenneth Black complains in his Sept. 9 column that Porter Memorial Hospital is a victim of unfair competition from other area hospitals.

St. Anthony Medical Center is planning to open a facility in Valparaiso. Black is afraid this will result in lost capital, diminished technology and, ultimately, the death of Porter Memorial Hospital.

Black is chief of staff at PMH. I commend him for guarding the well-being of PMH. However, he overlooks a major problem at PMH in the eyes of many county residents — abortion.

Many users of PMH are disgusted the hospital continues to allow obstetrician/ gynecologist Frank Behrend to abort pre-born children at its facility. Since the Webster decision in 1989 (and arguably even before then), PMH has had the legal authority to stop abortions at the hospital. It refuses to do so.

PMH is so insensitive to opposition to abortion that in 1991 the medical staff selected abortionist Frank Behrend as chief of staff for the hospital. Imagine, the county's only known abortionist serving as chief of staff at the county's only hospital. What a slap in the face to life-respecting county residents.

PMH may pretend it provides abortions only to serve young, indigent girls. But who really is getting abortions there? Here is a profile of the typical abortion patient at PMH, based on statistics from the Indiana State Board of Health.

In 1988, a typical year, 42 women had their pre-born babies aborted at PMH. The majority of these women were white, married, a high school graduate or more education, 25-29 years old (overall, 86 percent were age 20 or more), already had one or two children and 28 percent were having 2nd, 3rd or 4th abortion.

In our county, the debate about abortion is not about poor, unmarried, uneducated, minority young girls. Why should PMH sink in the slime of the abortion controversy when these women seeking them here apparently have the resources to go elsewhere for their abortions? Why should PMH provide "repeat" abortions to these women?

County residents are eager for an alternative to abortion-saturated Porter Memorial Hospital. In order to avoid PMH, my own family has traveled to St. Mary Medical Center in Hobart, St. Anthony's in Michigan City and LaPorte County Hospital for non-emergency medical care.

We and many other area residents welcome St. Anthony Medical Center with open arms, because St. Anthony's cherishes all human life and doesn't consider pre-born children as non-persons eligible for extermination at the whim of his or her mother.

If Dr. Black is serious about preserving all that is good about PMH, let him prove it by getting rid of all that is bad about PMH. He can begin by terminating abortions at the hospital.

JULIE A. WHEELAND
Valparaiso

R-9/21/92

by Toni Griffith-Byers
The Vidette-Messenger

VALPARAISO — You don't have to sell Shelley Hill on the Americans with Disabilities Act — or Katie Kostell, either.

They're participants in Respite Care's Friend to Friend program. The program pairs college students with developmentally disabled youngsters for 10 joyful summer weeks.

The college kids learn what it's like to work with the physically and mentally challenged.

Their handicapped counterparts get a big buddy all their own.

Once a week, for three hours, the new pals get together for a round of activities, anything from baking cookies to reading books.

Or gulping down hot dogs at Rogers-Lakewood Park. Friend to Friend recently wound up its 10th year with a picnic for its participants.

Hill had her hands full feeding the ducks and exploring wooded trails with her 7-year-old pal Chris Bailey of South Haven and two other program friends, Lauren Bettenhausen, 13, and Chris Cassom, 6, both of Valparaiso.

The 20-year-old Valparaiso University psychology major spent nine hours a week making friends with the three youngsters, all with varying degrees of disabilities.

Bailey has attention deficit disorder. His fidgety lack of concentration posed some problems, Hill said.

Hill dealt with them by calling "time out."

"When things were going wrong, I'd say 'Time out' and he had to sit with his hands on his lap and breathe deep for three minutes. He gets so wound up, he just has to take off."

So the two friends kept on the go, heading out for the beach where Bailey collected a jar-full of snails or cruising Southlake Mall, where the video arcade ate up $8 worth of tokens.

For Hill, an only child, it was a chance to play big sister that she'd never had — and a chance to make discoveries about herself and others.

"The important thing is if children are born with a handicap, that doesn't mean they won't live wonderful, normal lives like everyone else.

"Even if they can't live on their own or have a great job or a family of their own, these children are happy. Some people think if a child has a handicap they're some sort of reject product, but that's not true at all."

Though Hill used the program to explore career options, she's also discovered she has limitations of her own. Kids like Bailey are one thing; more severely disabled children are another.

"I don't feel I have all the qualities I need to deal with the profoundly handicapped."

Chesterton resident Kostell, a 19-year-old Purdue University early childhood education major, is keeping her career options open after a summer with 8-year-old Randy Cavinder of South Haven. Working with "special" kids is definitely a possibility, Kostell said.

Cavinder is moderately mentally handicapped and has some speech impairment. But Kostell and Cavinder communicated just fine, thank you.

"I liked just being with him," Kostell said. "He's a great kid. I love him. I'm going to miss him so much."

The duo got their faces and hands painted at the Porter County Fair, visited Chellberg Farm and "went to my house a lot," Kostell said.

Through it all, Kostell found things went "easier than I thought, but harder, too.

"It was so easy to have fun with him when we went out, so easy to find stuff to do, but harder because of my lack of educational experience. It was hard for me to know what Randy understands."

Cavinder loved "drives and going places," he beamed, in between skimming rocks and sticks across Lakewood's water.

Friend to Friend "worked wonders" for the boy, said his mother, Donna Cavinder.

"He gets to go out and be around other kids, to communicate in society. He doesn't feel so isolated."

Program makes everyone winner

It is exciting to be part of the Respite Care Friend to Friend Program which is truly a win/win/win/win situation, everyone wins: parent, child, college student and community.

Thanks to articles like that published in the Sept. 6 Vidette-Messenger, more and more families and individuals will have an opportunity to win.

If there is sufficient community interest, Home Health Services (administering agency for the Respite Care Program) hopes to expand the Friend to Friend Program into a year round opportunity.

Expansion of the program would provide more college students with the practical experience of working with special needs children and allow more time for each "friendship" to grow.

It also would extend the fun and stimulation which so benefit the children and provide additional "respite" for the family, especially the full-time caregiver.

Anyone who is interested in knowing more about the Friend to Friend Program, or Respite Care in general, is invited to call Laurie Custer (respite coordinator) or myself at Home Health Services/VNA of Porter County (462-5195).

LEE ANN DEAL
Program Director
Home Health Services of
Porter County Inc.

Too many people

9/12/92

Local activists get word to Congress

WASHINGTON — Two local environmentalists recently stormed Capitol Hill to take the Audubon Society's message to Congress.

Bill Blahunka of Highland and Nancylee Richmond-Jeffers of Boone Grove carried the population message to Washington.

"Overpopulation and overconsumption of the Earth's resources are causing worldwide deforestation, soil erosion, groundwater depletion, loss of species, and a host of other environmental ills," Richmond-Jeffers said.

"Family planning must be made available to all developing countries to help them achieve population stabilityt and sustainable growth."

As a leader, the United States must make the population issue a top priority, the society believes.

According to a recent United Nations report, world population is increasing faster than expected and will double to 10.2 billion by the year 2050, with 95 percent of growth in Third World countries.

Despite these facts, the Bush administration — following a policy adopted during the Reagan years — has withheld funds in support of overseas family planning and cut its share of support to the U.N. Population Fund.

Richmond-Jeffers, who has traveled extensively in Central America, recently returned from Peru, where there are 12 to 15 children per family, most needing assistance.

In 1979, the National Audubon Society took a step no other environmental organization had taken — establishing a population program "to ensure sound policies are established in the U.S. and overseas that contribute to the health, well being, and dignity of the individual citizen and that protect nonhuman species and their habitat."

The society has sought to influence legislators and hosted "Lobbyweek" Julv 19-24.

As conservation chair and vice-president, respectively, Blahunka and Richmond-Jeffers represented the Dunes-Calumet Audubon Society.

3

Stop explosion of population

The report of Sept. 12 that indicated two local environmentalists of the Dunes-Calumet Audubon Society went to Washington, D.C. for population restraint is good news.

The Sierra Club is one of several other organizations that recognize if the population continues to grow unrestrained, many undesirable effects will affect our children. In 1968 the Sierra Club persuaded Dr. Paul R. Ehrlich to write "The Population Bomb" and this highlighted the problems.

Recently the major scientific societies have published their concerns about the population explosion. This includes: The U.S. National Academy of Sciences; The Royal Society of London; and The American Association for the Advancement of Science.

In March, Dick and Jane Fryer, of the Hoosier Chapter, worked with Sierra's Karen Kalla, National Population Grassroots Coordinator, International Population Program to encourage Congress to support the United State's previous commitment to support international assistance.

The next issue of Sierra, Hoosier Chapter's Sierran, soon to go to press, has an article you might find of interest: "Twenty People Living in a 3-Room Flat", a preview of our future.

R- 9/28/92

JANE FRYER
Valparaiso

3

Appendix B

No reason to put corridor in park

Charlotte Read's argument to include the state Route 49 corridor in lakeshore expansion legislation begins to resemble an H & R Block commercial.

- Reason No. 1: The state needs it to upgrade the state routes 49 & 20 interchange. (The state subsequently denied this charge. It possesses enough land to upgrade the cloverleafs.)
- Reason No. 2: The Town of Porter might rezone the area commercial. (In fact, the town has always turned down such a request. But neither is there a guarantee the National Park Service won't develop the area.)
- Reason No. 3: 160 new homes could be built on the 33 acres in question. (Homes already exist along the corridor. But the Izaak Walton League and Shirley Heinze Fund (a.k.a. Save the Dunes Council) owns undeveloped parcels. Is Read threatening to subdivide if they aren't acquired by the government?)

Ms. Read is hard-pressed to justify the route 49 acquisition proposal. The fact remains, two local environmental groups stand to financially gain if the corridor is acquired by the NPS. We've caught them with their hands in the cookie jar.

It's to the credit of Indiana senators Dan Coats and Richard Lugar that they refuse to go along with the scam.

JOANNA WAUGH
Porter

R-9/20/92

33

Response was personal attack

It is unfortunate Charlotte Read has once again chosen to wage a personal attack against those who dare to offer a differing point of view.

The point of my recent letter was to praise Indiana senators Richard Lugar and Dan Coats for their support of property rights while protecting areas of Northwest Indiana that really needed protection.

Charlotte Read's response was to lodge a personal attack against me while elaborating "ad nauseum" about non issues that have been debated and discredited.

Thanks again to our elected senators for taking such a strong position in favor of property rights in the face of pressure from the radical special interest groups.

The citizens of Northwest Indiana have spoken. The dunes war is over and the dunes are saved. It is time for the environmental extremists to get out of the real estate business and get back to solving real environmental problems.

BILL THEIS
Chesterton

R-9/20/92

Many do not listen to alarms

Joanna Waugh has for some time had a lot of negative things to say via The Vidette-Messenger Reader Opinion column (most recently Sept. 20) about efforts to slow down and halt the degradations of the environment.

She seems unaware the house in which she lives, her only possible home, has a smoldering fire in a back room. Fire alarms are available, but she has not felt the need for them. She seems not to believe in insurance against fire.

She does not realize the smoldering fire is gaining momentum and will burst forth at any time. Once her house is burnt, she will be unable to rebuild; there will be nothing left with which to rebuild — not ever. It's best to listen to and heed the alarms.

Those like Charlotte Read and the organizations with which she has worked so long and valiantly have tried to alert Ms. Waugh and her ilk to the availability of fire alarms and the value of insuring against fire. What is it they say? "None are so deaf as those who refuse to listen."

Ms. Waugh is treading in dangerous ground when she accuses those like Charlotte Read of having "their hands in the cookie jar" and terms their efforts a "scam".

Ms. Waugh, luckily, is able to fit her feet nicely into her mouth at the same time.

MARY LOUISE WOMER
Valparaiso

R-9/27/92

34

Anti-corridor arguments weak

Several weeks ago, I responded to a letter by Bill Theis opposing preservation of the state Route 49 corridor in the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore that appeared in another area newspaper.

Imagine how surprised I was to read in The Vidette-Messenger not just another Bill Theis letter but a Joanna Waugh letter responding to my letter, a letter never sent to The Vidette-Messenger.

Readers must be aware the Save the Dunes Council and a coalition of more than 20 other environmental groups, small and large, prefer and support the dunes bill U.S. Rep. Peter Visclosky, D-Merrillville, got through the House last year. We are also very pleased senators Dan Coats and Richard Lugar secured Senate passage of a dunes bill the end of July.

There are differences between the two bills. One of those differences is that the Route 49 corridor would be preserved in the Visclosky bill but is absent from the Coats/Lugar bill. We continue to regard this 33-acre parcel as important to the National Lakeshore, to the State Park, and to Porter County.

Opponents of the corridor have tried to "stretch" its size. The corridor in the National Lakeshore now is about ⅓ mile long, and begins just a short distance south of where Route 49 ends. What we would like to see added to the National Lakeshore is about another ¼ mile.

History itself belies Theis's claim development of the corridor is a non-issue. Several well-publicized attempts at variances from the existing residential zoning have been made, fortunately turned down at the time by the previous Porter Town Council.

Existing residential zoning if carried to its full extent, including subdividing the several large, vacant tracts, to the same density allowed in the existing subdivisions, would allow up to 160 homes to be built in this 33-acre area. Such development would destroy the corridor.

Considering the intensive use of Route 49, especially at shift-change time and on nice summer weekends, additional development of any sort would exacerbate present traffic conditions. Even the Duneland Chamber of Commerce is on record as favoring inclusion of the Route 49 corridor in the National Lakeshore.

The facts do not support Theis's claim that "we cannot afford to pay" the price for acquiring the land. Money appropriated for buying park land comes from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which gets the bulk of its money from revenues from the sale of offshore oil leases. The money that could be spent improving and beautifying our Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore may be spent in another park in another state.

While two environmental groups own a small portion of the Route 49 corridor, trying to preserve and protect a 33-acre corridor with 6 acres of land should strike even Mr. Theis as impossible.

Theis has also argued Porter County cannot afford to lose another "inch" from its tax base. He is mum on the "inches" lost from $40 million of tax abatements granted by Porter County governments; the failure of Porter County Commissioners to sell county-owned vacant property, thereby preventing return to the tax base; and the loss of tax base with major public developments such as the new County Administration Building.

R 9/28/92

CHARLOTTE J. READ
assistant director
Save the Dunes Council

35

Conservationists have not given up

What is the matter with the hysterical person Johanna Waugh? Now she's accusing the worthy Ikes and Ikettes of Porter County of "having their hands in the federal cookie jar."

Even these lady Ikettes are very determined individuals. They have a glint in their eye. That glint is called "conservation" and "environment."

They are tough determined ladies. I'm especially thinking of Faith and Miriam. And what of Charlotte? That worthy lady has Swedish ancestors of iron will on both sides.

Faith spoke up at a meeting set up by U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Merrillville, and held the rapt audience spell-bound for 15 minutes talking about the essential need for the state Route 49 corridor to be added to the National Park.

Johanna Waugh's ravings are like the buzzing of a gnat but it is irksome to read such ridiculous rantings. Grow up, Johanna Waugh, and stand for something worthwhile. Join the Izaac Walton League and work for the public good instead of the greedy and selfish developers.

And if people of Bill Theis's ilk think the dunes war is over all I have to do is quote another leader who was in a dark and dismal situation: "We have just begun to fight."

R 9/28/92

ED GUSTAFSON
Chesterton

36

S-9/21/92

Help save only home we have

JOHN WOLF
The Amen Corner

While Porter County wrestles with wetland and tree ordinances, nations wrestle in an attempt to avert global disaster.

About 150 nations represented by 20,000 scientists, environmentalists, diplomats and public officials recenty meet in an Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro to to build a consensus on the future of our planet.

For the first time, the United Nations sponsored conference, recognized a major change is occuring in the world. Despite many problems, the Earth Summit proved to be a new beginning for our world.

The United States missed a golden opportunity to effect "The New World Order" that President Bush has spoken about. With the end of the Cold War, the United States had an opportunity to spearhead an alliance and assert itself as the leader in the fight against depletion, pollution, famine, and, quite possibly, human extinction. We didn't.

The same conflict between environmental protection and economic development being debated in Porter County was in the arena at the Rio Conference. President Bush protested the cost in dollars and jobs and proposed a concept of "sustainable development."

His position that "growth is the key" was popular in the 1950s and 60s but has been called into question in the past decade.

The Union of Concerned Scientists says, "There is now a growing awareness that only FALSE progress comes when it is made at the expense of nature."

The USC also says, "a new understanding has arisen among the leaders of the richer nations (with the major exception, so far, of President Bush) that all our futures are inextricably linked. The "north" is beginning to learn that it cannot continue to consume the vast majority of the world's resources if the "south" is to make its contributions on population and biodiversity, which are necessary to environmental salvation."

Sadly, the Earth Summit failed to achieve any of the important agreements sought. Population control, was removed from the negotiations, largely through the influence of the Catholic Church. Other third world delegates objected to the rich industrial nations preaching to them that they need to have less children.

"As a result of President Bush's personal intervention, the global warming treaty was stripped of its most important provisions, leaving only a hollow shell," says the UCS.

A journalist friend who attended the Earth Summit writes, "Rarely has the United States been so isolated in the international political arena. In addition to the traditional conflict between the rich and poor nations, the U.S. separated itself from the other industrialized nations by refusing to sign the Biodiversity Convention and by insisting on a weakened version of the Climate Change Convention over European objections. The event was far from being a model of sustainability."

The Biodiversity treaty was the most controversial of the two-week event. Biodiversity refers to the immensely complex genetic base of plants and animals which is the unique result of millions of years of evolutionary change.

The vast majority of genetic diversity is located in the Third World. The nations of the Third World claim that biotechnological firms have stolen genetic plant material (much of it for medicines), improved this material in their laboratories, patented the changes, only to sell the new product back to them at enormous profit.

The treaty was to help slow down the rate at which species of plants and animals are disappearing as a result of encroachment of humans on their territories as well as climate change.

In the Convention on Climate Change there was a similar boycott by the United States, the world's largest producer of greenhouse gases, claiming it would hurt U.S. firms. Emission timetables and quantities were watered down to general rather than specific terms, thereby gutting the document.

Who should pay? Who should administer the funds? The conference was divided on north/south lines. The northern industrial nations were asked for 0.7 percent of their gross national profit to development aid. The European nations, Japan and the United States were unwilling.

Despite these failures, a foundation has been laid upon which a structure for saving the world can be built. There are those who feel environmental treaties are biased against economic growth. However, according to a recent Roper survey, nearly two-thirds of Americans believe economic growth and environmental protection "go hand in hand."

Environmental problems are local and regional, they are also global and can be dealt with only on a global basis. The Porter County Wetlands Ordinance and the Valparaiso Tree Ordinance are part of the whole.

When we consider that 250 million Americans consume as much energy, food, and other resources as 4 billion people in the developing world, we can understand how we have a stake in preserving a shrinking planet. It's the only home we have. Let's help save it. There is not much time left.

Amen, Until Next Monday

(Wolf, an author and retired minister, is active in many civic groups and activities)

Prr-c
preservation

Advancements not false progress

I am troubled by John Wolf's "Amen Corner" column in the Sept. 21 Vidette-Messenger. Not because he thinks America "missed a golden opportunity" when it didn't jump aboard the Earth Summit bullet train, but because he subscribes to the notion that "...only false progress comes when it is at the expense of nature."

As a man of the cloth, Mr. Wolf surely acknowledges our very existence on this planet is "at the expense of nature." Farmers plant and harvest; they raise cattle, hogs and fowl for human consumption. Biomedical research utilizes lab animals and chemicals to save lives.

Does Mr. Wolf consider production of electricity "false progress?" It takes coal and gas to generate electricity — all products of nature. Is the combustion engine "false progress" as well?

Mr. Wolf chastises Americans for consuming "...as much energy, food and other resources as 4 billion people in the developing world..." But he doesn't mention this consumptive society saved Europe from Hitler. It is still considered to be "the breadbasket of the world."

During this century, American technology brought unprecedented prosperity to more people than ever before in history. That's nothing of which to be ashamed.

There's no argument man has entered into a new covenant with nature due, in large part, to photos of a fragile blue planet hanging alone in black space.

Mr. Wolf's column implies we have squandered our inheritance. On the contrary, man has wisely invested nature's gifts.

JOANNA WAUGH
Porter

R- 9/27/92

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R-9/5/92

Mercury's rising - in fish

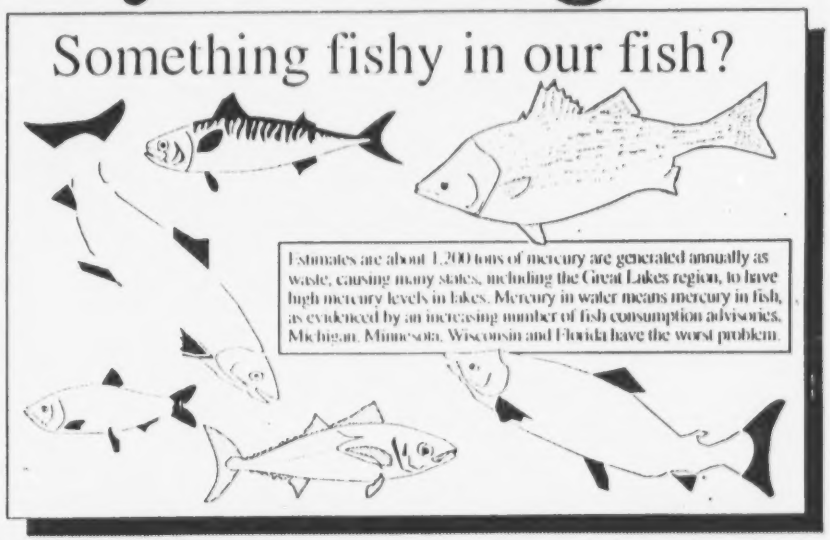
WASHINGTON (AP) — Mercury contamination in fish is rising rapidly in some regions such as the Great Lakes and may be growing in other parts of the country as well, two environmental advocacy groups said today.

The study by Clean Water Action and the Clean Water Fund found that 26 states have issued health advisories in recent years because of high concentrations of mercury in fish found in at least some lakes and waterways.

The most severe mercury contamination problems have been found in Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Florida but "early testing in Maine and Massachusetts suggests that New England may have a serious mercury problem as well," the study said.

Mercury is a waste product from a variety of industrial sources and from the burning of garbage and coal-fired electric power plants. The government estimates that 1,200 tons of mercury is generated as waste annually from industrial and other sources, much of it put in landfills but some released into the air and directly into waterways.

Henry Cole, the principal author of the report, argued that the findings suggest that mercury contamination of lakes and rivers may be similar to acid rain and at times affect regions far from the source of the pollution.


Something fishy in our fish?
Estimates are about 1,200 tons of mercury are generated annually as waste, causing many states, including the Great Lakes region, to have high mercury levels in lakes. Mercury in water means mercury in fish, as evidenced by an increasing number of fish consumption advisories. Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Florida have the worst problem.

"The most severe damage is showing up downwind of areas where there has been major growth in coal burning and garbage incineration," said Cole.

Environmentalists have for some time argued that coal burning power plants and garbage incinerators are a major source of mercury pollution of lakes and waterways. The electric utility industry has maintained that much of the mercury in waterways comes from natural sources.

Mercury is a toxic metal that can affect the brain and nervous system. Children and infants are at extra risk from mercury-contaminated fish.

Fish contamination from mercury has been most severe in the Great Lakes region, the study said. Authorities in Michigan have issued mercury health advisories for all of the state's more than 11,000 lakes. The group said mercury concentrations in some Minnesota lakes are rising at a rate of 3 percent to 5 percent a year.

In much of the Florida Everglades large game fish have been found to have mercury levels of 1.5 parts per million.

In some water bodies of Massachusetts, bass have been found to have mercury concentrations as high as 2.4 parts per million, the environmentalists said.

The study criticized the Bush administration for not enacting regulations that would reduce mercury emissions from garbage incinerators and reducing mercury releases from coal-fired power plants.

Cole, a former scientist for the Environmental Protection Agency's air quality office, said a national testing program was needed for mercury in fish because many states test fish for mercury only on a spot basis or not at all. He said even some states — such as Pennsylvania and New Jersey — that have relatively large releases of mercury do not test fish for mercury on a regular basis, although often they conduct spot checks.

According to the study, the 26 states that have issued at least some fish advisories for mercury in recent years are: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.

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Hg/e pollution

Rrr-e
pollution

Study on mercury levels misleading

The Associated Press article on mercury contamination of U.S. waterways in the Sept. 5 Vidette-Messenger was very misleading. In it, two obscure environmental groups and a former EPA air quality scientist claim mercury levels in our lakes and streams - including Lake Michigan - are on the rise.

Yet, according to the International Joint Commission on Great Lakes water quality, concentrations of most toxic chemicals within the Great Lakes have fallen since the 1970s and stabilized.

Furthermore, the EPA estimates that about 2.6 pounds of mercury enter the Great Lakes daily — that's 949 pounds a year. Compare this figure to the 1,200 tons this article claims is generated nationwide on an annual basis. It takes no math wiz to calculate the Great Lakes load is 4/10,000ths of the national burden.

A May/June, 1992 article on Great Lakes water quality appeared in "Tuebor Terra," the official magazine of Michigan's United Conservation Clubs. It said "some studies may have weaknesses and such factors as habitat, nutrition and gene pools may come into play" when considering the effects of toxic chemicals upon animal life around and within the Great Lakes.

It is curious that many people are quick to dismiss industry-generated scientific studies as self-serving while attributing only the most noble intentions to those done by environmental organizations.

R- 9/16/92

JOANNA WAUGH
Porter

Appendix C

Rrr-m
taxes

Cuts to hurt

E-911, 4-H programs threatened

by Steve Walsh 9/11/92
The Vidette-Messenger

VALPARAISO — Facing a tough year financially, the County Council continued searching for deeper cuts at budget hearings.

Medical insurance increases were threatened, some salaries were cut and the sheriff is threatening E-911 may not happen.

In addition, the courts lost at least one commissioner, and the second may be gone before the year is out.

If the decision on which commissioner is let go is based on seniority, Jeff Thode and his court reporter will not return in January. Thode took office this year.

James Johnson is the other court commissioner. If the possible $1 million appeal to raise the tax levy fails before the state Board of Tax Commissioners, that position might also be cut.

Wednesday night, the County Council returned all departmental budgets and ordered an additional 5 percent in cuts. Thursday, some of the offices came back with pay cuts.

The sheriff's department squirmed the most. Dembinski cut his entire $125,000 budget to buy new cars, $15,000 to replace aging bullet-proof vests, and other expenses.

The Porter County Drug Unit lost $10,000 of the $40,000 budget.

Friday morning, Dembinski was back with cuts in medical expenses for prisoners, supplies and other funds.

Earlier in the week, Dembinski lost the four dispatchers he requested to run the Enhanced-911 program — scheduled to start by the middle of next year. He said without the new dispatchers, he can't start the E-911 program.

• Specific department cuts listed on page 3A.

County Council President Karen Hughes said if the money becomes available next year, E-911 is a high priority. If not, the sheriff will have to make do.

Hughes said the cuts are necessary to find room to fund county employees' medical insurance. Trying to head off any raises in employee contributions, the council will most likely place $1-1.2 million in the account — up from $735,000 a year.

She doesn't equate the 5 percent cut directly with funding health insurance, but Aylesworth does. He is telling department heads anything less than a 5 percent cut will translate into higher employee contributions or deductibles.

By Friday morning, word had filtered out that the $29,000 4-H budget was possibly being stripped from the commissioners' budget. A group of about 15 4-H leaders and volunteers stood outside the council chambers, demanding no cuts.

County Extension Office Youth Coordinator James Jordan said the program and the 3,761 kids its serves would not last the year without county funds.

Though he could not speak for the other members, Council member Richard Buchanan said he did not think the program would be cut entirely, though in future years he said the county would like to see the Fair Board pick up at least part of the cost.

Rrr-m
taxes

9/13/92

Tax only way

by Steve Walsh
The Vidette-Messenger

VALPARAISO — Nobody wants to say it, but county residents should expect fewer services or an income tax.

For the last week, the County Council struggled with balancing a general fund budget $600,000 less than 1992's $15.5 million. Department heads had requested $18 million-plus.

What they wanted and got were two different things.

A number of programs were slashed, three positions eliminated and many salaries cut.

Starting her term with budget hearings, new member Margaret Willis said, "We're not cutting fat anymore. We're cutting muscle, tendons and bone."

Council member Mike Aylesworth warned new taxes may be needed.

"Without a change in the tax structure, this situation will only get worse."

The council must speak in favor of a tax if the issue comes up next year, he said. He mentioned the Youth Services Bureau and Health Department as items the county will soon be unable to afford.

The state could revamp the property tax freeze limiting local budget increased to 5 percent annually. But barring legislation, the only change the county can make is adopt an option income tax.

The most talked about is a maximum 1 percent tax — most allowed by law — coupled with an 8 percent homestead credit on property taxes. The tax can only be voted in between January and March 31 of any year.

Council President Karen Hughes said when the county approached the idea in 1991, there was no support. In January, the Valparaiso City Council took a straw vote against it.

"Without the support of the cities we can't do it," she said.

When the County Council held a round of meetings last year to discuss a new tax, the most talked-about needs were roads and drainage. After budget hearings, council members also hope to avoid lay-offs.

Without an income tax, Hughes said the county may be forced to bond for necessities like new squad cars.

"It's the worst kind of tax, since you pay twice — once for the purchase and again for the interest."

Council member Carol Knoblock said her south county constituency doesn't want an income tax. After hearing department heads, she still doesn't like the idea, but added, "I really can't say yes or no at this point."

Outside the hearings, department heads sympathized with the council's plight, then grumbled about nothing being done to avert cuts.

"In the past year I have realized the need to find extra funds somewhere. ... There has to be some change," Sheriff Larry Dembinski said.

Next year, his department has no money for new cars. And with the beating cars take, he said it won't be long before a major investment is needed to keep the fleet rolling.

Council member Richard Buchanan said departments must be more innovative with less money and people must expect less in the short-term.

"We've been through tough times before. We'll get through them again."

Budget ax

9/6/92

$4 million in cuts needed in '93

by Steve Walsh
The Vidette-Messenger

VALPARAISO — No one is kidding anyone — it's going to get ugly come Tuesday.

At 9 a.m., the County Council will convene its annual budget hearings. Together with the Health Department budget, they want more than $16.5 million for 1993.

- With interest payments and other revenue shrinking during the recession, the council will be looking to cut back from last year's budget. The trick will be to find $4 million in cuts while still paying expenses including a new court and more money for county health insurance.

With interest payments and other revenue shrinking during the recession, the council will be looking to cut back from last year's budget.

The trick will be to find $4 million in cuts while still paying expenses including a new court and more money for county health insurance.

Counting the jail, the Sheriff's Department has the largest single departmental budget, at $3.59 million.

County Sheriff Larry Dembinski is asking for $4.2 million next year. He wants five new patrol officers, five new jailers, two clerks and four dispatchers to handle the new Enhanced 911 program.

"I know I'm beating a dead horse, but I can't let it go," said County Sheriff Larry Dembinski.

The state has cited the jail for not having enough personnel to handle the load. Dembinski said his last stand will be for the new jailers.

County Council President Karen Hughes said he probably won't even get those.

In this tough budget year, she will come to Tuesday's meeting armed with an Indiana Association of Counties study which states Porter County has the highest sheriff and jail budget in the state for counties its size.

"I know they have a tough job, but we've treated them pretty well over the years," she said.

If coming before the council with a gun and a badge won't get the sheriff what he wants, the other departments aren't expected to fare better.

The consensus is there will be no raises. For ease of accounting, departments generally submit proposed budget with 10 percent across the board increases — letting the council decide the final figure. Cutting out the raises only comes to about $700,000 worth of cuts.

Most departments try for new employees. The total general fund budget requests 21 new employees. Most likely none will be hired.

The next step is capital expenses. There is roughly $500,000 in new equipment. That will probably go as well. Hughes said she will lobby to keep $50,000 in hardware and software purchases, to keep the computerization of county offices on track.

In the last two years, capital spending as a group was eliminated, but data processing was able to keep most of its funds. Hughes said the computers cut the need for hiring more people.

The county Board of Commissioners are asking for $850,000 to fund the county's self-insurance fund. The fund had historically stayed at $750,000, which Commissioner Brian Gesse said is why the fund is now depleted.

The consultant hired by the county said the fund needs roughly $1.2 million to stay solvent. Gesse said the $850,000 represents fiscal reality and some wishful thinking that claims will not be high next year.

Passed by the legislature, a new Superior Court will start July 1. It has a $57,227 operating budget. No money is set-aside to create the court, including furniture and renovation of space at the North Porter County Complex.

Gesse said he doesn't know where the money will come from.

The County Council is contemplating asking the state Board of Tax Commissioners to go above its tax rate to build and operate the court. Requests to raise the tax levy are due Oct. 2, and the county wouldn't know if the request is granted until the 1993 budget is approved by the state.

But even with the increase, the cuts won't make the $4 million mark.

Hughes said the council has no cohesive plan to find the rest. Come 9 a.m. Tuesday, she said members may simply tell the departments to take back their proposed budgets and cut 15 to 20 percent off the top — after cutting the raises and new people.

(Two budgets for Voter's Registration. Story on page 3A.)

Arz-m
taxes

Blantant untruths not constructive

Constructive criticism is necessary for positive change. The purpose of the election system is to encourage such analyses. However, blatant untruths do not serve any valild purpose.

It is a blatant untruth the Porter County Council president gave the council a 10 percent raise. The council with my support and vote decreased its salary by 4.8 percent to make their salary one of the lowest of counties of comparable size (100-150,000 population) in the state.

What is the truth is this county's general fund has the lowest property tax rate of any county of comparable size in the state, except for three counties. Those three counties' property taxes are supplemented by COIT (county option income tax). Therefore we have the lowest taxes.

What is the truth is the council has been very frugal and taken very hard and necessary stands to preserve our low tax rate. What is also true is this county has not sacrificed caring in order to keep its rates low. It supports 4H, youth services, services to the elderly, services to the handicapped, prenatal and well-baby health services, the environment, and medical care to the needy, to name a few.

Retain good government in Porter County.

KAREN L. HUGHES
President
Porter County Council
Valparaiso

R-9/18/92

County needs option income tax

Porter County definitely needs an option income tax of 1 percent or less. County roads, bridges, and other infrastructures are wearing out fast, or are already worn out.

We have too much growth in the county which is causing too much traffic. The county needs a policy of less growth for at least 10 to 15 years, so the county can catch up on much needed repair or replacement of infrastructure.

CHARLES SOLTIS
Valparaiso

R-9/27/92

We should know where funds go

Perhaps the people in Porter County should see a front page article in The Vidette-Messenger which describes where every penny of the 1993 county general fund budget will be used.

Should we consider cutting some more jobs and some more salaries? I have had my salary cut.

Mike Aylesworth's idea that we cannot afford the county Youth Services Bureau and the county Health Department is ludicrous. Would Mike like living again with epidemics of measles, diptheria, whooping cough and tuberculosis (which is showing up in drug resistant strains)? How about Hepatitis B?

Maybe keeping the muscles, tendons and bones (county council member Margaret Willis' statement) is more important than keeping Aylesworth and Willis.

GERIE BAKER
Valparaiso

R- 9/20/92

Pre-m taxes

County tax rate already obscene

There have been numerous articles and an editorial, (To tax or not), that seem to be taking the taxpayers of Porter County to task for not being very willing to take on a bigger tax burden.

There was also another article that stated the average taxpayer in the United States pays 40 percent of total wages to taxes in one form or another.

The tax rate in this county already is obscene. When members of the County Council suggest I am not doing my civic duties when I refuse to shoulder a bigger tax burden, I say, when will enough be enough? When should taxpayers draw the line?

Last year when the debate over a county income tax raged, it was mentioned a large percentage of the money would be earmarked for the South Shore Railroad. I live, work, and pay taxes in Porter County. No one helps me get to work.

When I need to repair my car, or replace it with a new one, I am the one who has to come up with the money. Why should I have to subsidize someone's ride to work? Because someone decides to live in Porter County and work in Chicago, why do I have to pay more taxes?

These privileged people are easy to spot. They're the families that lives next door or just down the streeet that still have Illinois license plates on their cars after two or three years. If the County Council members need more tax money why don't they lead a drive to tax these deadbeats and make them pay their fair share of the tax.

I don't want to see the quality of life in Porter County go down the drain. I always have and always will pay my fair share of taxes. We are all going through hard economic times and will all have to learn to do without until things get better.

If you need to make cuts, take money from the South Shore and make the people riding it pay for the service they seem to need.

R-9/27/92 DAVID J. NICOLAUS
Valparaiso

Get spending, income in line

Must Porter County go the way of the federal government? Just because the feds can't get their spending vs. income budgeted correctly doesn't mean Porter County has to follow.

For someone who hasn't the time to keep up on all county workings, I nevertheless do read the newspaper every day. I don't recall many interviews with or articles by Porter County Council members or County Commissioners explaining why taxes must go up again even though our taxable population, tax rate and assessed values are growing.

It is distressing to read articles about increasing (or creating new) taxes again. County leaders need to get a handle on expenditures. Be like a business — treat the company (public's) money as if it were your own.

If so we wouldn't see the unresearched spending we have in our county. If it were researched, officials would realize the county can't afford it. Don't spend unless you have the funds to pay for it.

A recent newspaper article quoted a department head as saying "Morale is low in my department." Sure it is. It will always be low when the workers realize their managers can't effectively and efficiently manage.

Residents, please write, attend, talk, yell, whatever you can do to let council members and commissioners know you are uninformed and/or unhappy with the way they are managing our money. They have to get the message from enough of us to make them get the county spending in line with the county income.

R-9/18 A2 MICHAEL RIDLBAUER
Valparaiso

CDC will wait

9/15/92

Affordable housing petition withdrawn

by Susan A. Emery
The Vidette Messenger

VALPARAISO — Until neighbors' concerns are addressed, the city's latest affordable housing proposal has been put on hold.

The Greater Valparaiso Community Development Corporation will re-evaluate the plan, which calls for four more homes, a total of 14, on 2.6 acres on the south side of Joliet Road. It was to be presented to the Plan Commission tonight.

The petition was been withdrawn, in light of a recent meeting with property owners near the project, CDC president Les Robinson said. He characterized the get-together as a very factual, unemotional discussion.

"We felt we would like to incorporate some of their comments."

One of the concerns CDC was unable to answer involved the drainage situation in the area. Marion Manor, an adjacent subdivision, was built under county specifications, and later annexed into the city.

"They don't have storm sewers. They do have a drainage problem ... We feel we need to spend more time addressing that," he said.

There's also been confusion as to the total amount of acreage in the project.

"The original belief the subdivision occupied 2.6 acres was wrong," said CDC attorney Bill Wagner.

The 10-lot plan that was approved contained 4.28 acres, the actual metes and bounds description, he said. In all of the minutes from previous meetings, everyone was operating off an incorrect acreage, he said.

Asked why there was a discrepancy, Robinson said, "I don't know."

Public notices indicated 4.28 acres, but it was verbally stipulated the acreage involved was 2.6, he said. The divergence infuriated many residents, who have opposed the project since its inception.

One of those, Rich Homan of 254 Bogata Ave., who spoke at Monday's City Council meeting.

"If I'd given up I wouldn't be here tonight."

"We're tired of hearing about errors," said council member Don Larr, another project foe.

The council rezoned 15 acres to open space for a park and 2.6 acres for residential single family for the affordable homes, he said.

"The City Council rezoned 17.6 acres and that's all they're going to get."

Robinson said CDC will resubmit its petition to the Plan Commission Oct. 13.

5-1

Many questions on housing plan

It seems like only yesterday we wrote a Reader Opinion letter stating our concern over the use of park property for subsidized housing.

Since then the trail of deceit and deception has gone from the city planner to the Plan Commission to the City Council and state officials.

At the information meeting hosted by the Community Development Corp. Sept. 10 we found out the CDC does not know how many homes it wants to build; how much the homes will cost; how much the infrastructure will cost; which way the run-off water will flow; the appraised value of the property; if the city will sell the property to it; and was not aware the legal description of the property exceeded 2.6 acres.

Every piece of documentation which has been published has stated 2.6 acres of land would be used for the housing development. That figure was presented to the Plan Commission, the City Council, the CDC board, the citizens around the proposed development, and the state for the infrastructure grant.

When it was learned the legal description exceeded the 2.6 acres, someone provided information to The Vidette-Messenger suggesting the 2.6 acres is a mistake. The mistake is with the legal description and that is what should be corrected.

If this travesty is not corrected there will be no doubt this was a well-conceived plan to deceive city officials, the residents around the park and the Valparaiso taxpayers.

Some of the people involved are held in high esteem by my wife and I. The facts in this issue speak for themselves.

If city officials allow this situation to go uncorrected, we and many more will wonder about the character and motive of the people who are members of the CDC board, the Plan Commission, the City Council and the city planner and mayor.

R-9/30/92

JIM NEWLIN
MARY NEWLIN
Valparaiso

RR-m housing

Rrr-m
health

S-9/14/92

Look at three objectives to fix health care system

JOHN WOLF
The Amen Corner

A wise friend once said, "Where you stand determines what you see." If you believe affordable health care is a God-given human right, you will look at health care differently than those who believe it is an option only for those who can afford it.

There are many opinions on what is the best plan for the nation. They are offered by political parties, the American Medical Association, University professors, etc.

Theologians remind us life is not possible for mortal beings without illness. Beginning with that premise, why is America the only civilized nation without a health care plan for its citizens?

The answers to the complicated questions of who pays, the technologies and treatments, will fall into place when the public decides health care is a human right. Therefore, there must be universal access to care.

You can't pick up a magazine or turn on a television program without hearing about the problems Americans are having with the health care system.

Although the number of doctors has doubled in the past 25 years to 600,000, Kris Keyes, writing in a medical journal says, "The public feels the system is in crisis and needs fundamental change...I do not believe the nation as a whole is receiving good value from the health care system."

"Where you stand determines what you see." Try standing on three fundamental objectives and other issues will fall into place:

- Health care for all Americans. Between 1979 and 1987, the number of Americans without health insurance rose by a 25 percent — from 30 million to 37 million. A comprehensive plan, regardless of design, must assure every American, regardless of income, place of employment or health status, has access to health insurance.

- Control costs. Costs have accelerated far beyond normal inflation or any other service. In 1965, the United States spent six percent of the Gross National Product on health care. Now it is around 13 percent. Medicare is clamping down on charges by providers. Why does competition not work in the health care industry? In a hospital journal of July 20, 1990, Dr. William Williams puts it this way:

"The consumer (patient) receives, but doesn't pay; the provider (hospital, doctor, or pharmacy) gives to the consumer, but receives from the intermediary (insurance company); the intermediary pays, but doesn't receive; none of them buys. The physician-buyer buys, but neither pays, nor receives."

(The word "broker" might be used in place of "buyer".) Is it any wonder there is so much paperwork and health care costs are "a mystery"?

- Prevention in wellness programs. We spend far too much on health care programs to cure illness. We invest too few dollars to keep well.

Tom Schumann, a Valparaiso University alumnus and vice-president of Mead Paper Company, sent me a pie-chart of how health care insurance costs for his company had jumped 22 percent in 1990 and again in 1991 and how the increase was generated. A large share was from "medical inflation". Can it be stopped?

Businesses point to their increasing financial responsibility for health care as a brake on growth and competitiveness. Peter Magowan, CEO of Safeway Inc., wrote, "Corporate health care spending is now the equivalent of 45 per cent of net corporate profits. We know that these out-sized increases in health care costs are twice as high per person as the Germans and the Japanese pay for health care. This puts us at a disadvantage relative to our overseas competitors."

Health care is a $550 billion industry. Market-force does not seem to make for efficiency (too much of the costs are for administrative paper work), it invites costly duplication (witness the attempt to build two fully-equipped outpatient surgery centers in Porter County), and it puts an undue burden on those who are ill.

The candidates for president differ dramatically on this point. Mr. Bush's plan relies on competition to set market rates for health services, with no guarantee those rates will be low.

Mr. Clinton wants to reform the system, based on the plan proposed by Sen. George Mitchell, D-Maine. Dr. Robert Blendon, Harvard University, writes, "If Clinton gets in we would likely see some plan enacted in four years. It would be hard for me to believe that President Bush would seriously push ahead on health care reform."

The Canadian health system spends a lower portion of its GNP on health care than the United States. Yet everyone pays and everyone receives, the cost distributed equally among taxpayers rather than falling disproportionally on the ill. It is fair, it is efficient, and it costs less.

While Americans complain of taxes, is there any better reason to tax ourselves than for health care? Especially when the present entrepreneurial profit-making system has gone out of control and no longer puts the interest of the patient first.

A comprehensive health care plan would, in the long run, cost less than we pay. We citizens of Porter County are witnesses to the ethical impoverishment of a system that puts two duplicate outpatient surgical centers within a mile of each other.

"Where you stand determines what you see". It's time for a change in our nation's health care system.

Amen, until next Monday.

Rrr-m
'hcalth

Don't jeopardize U.S. health care

John Wolf's column in the Sept. 14 Vidette-Messenger, shows everyone has a diagnosis for our "crisis" in health care, and some even prescribe medicine for a cure.

However, the Hippocratic Oath demands from physicians "First, do no harm." We non-physicians should consider this advice when deciding about changes in our health care system. Illnesses must be identified and understood before they are treated.

In the first of Mr. Wolf's objectives, he confuses "health care for all Americans" with insurance coverage to pay for it. All Americans are getting health care at the moment, albeit inadequate and difficult to obtain in some cases. What all Americans don't have is an insurance company or government program to pay for it.

Skipping his second point for a moment, his third objective is "prevention in wellness programs." Wellness programs have specious appeal, but cannot help with costs in the long run. This is because prevention postpones illness to later in life when the inevitable diseases of the oldest old are very costly.

His second point is about cost control. He correctly identifies this as a problem. I would contend it is the problem, because we would not be talking about health care if everyone could afford it easily. Our health care technology and personnel are the world's best.

Mr. Wolf correctly complains competition in this industry does not seem to work to keep costs as low as possible. The cure, however, of having a national government program rather than a private market solution seems likely to produce harm.

Think of the post office when you think about government cost control and efficiency. A better approach to a cure would be to reform the system in a way that would allow meaningful competition.

There is no reason, at least theoretically, why two med-surg centers in Valparaiso shouldn't lower costs for Valparaiso residents through competition.

We need a change, but the only real problem is cost and we should take care not to jeopardize the excellence of our physicians' and hospitals' abilities by getting the government involved.

PATRICK W. BANKSTON
Valparaiso

R-9/16/92

Appendix D

Love that parade

9/13/92

by Philip Potempa
The Vidette-Messenger

VALPARAISO — You might call it a magic morning.

The 1992 Popcorn Festival theme, "Popcorn is Magic," was cleverly incorporated into this year's parade in several magical ways.

More than 115 parade units glided down Calumet Avenue and Lincolnway Saturday for the 14th annual tradition.

The two-hour parade was led by a procession of police, 1992 grand marshal Sina Hickman, director of the Porter County Red Cross and former White Sox baseball player Ron Kittle.

There were 37 floats entered in the parade, each displaying a sponsor and an original theme.

The grand prize was awarded to Hunt-Wesson's float entry entitled "Orville Pops Magic."

Following a decoration theme from "The Arabian Nights" story, the float featured an "Aladdin's lamp" covered in unpopped corn, a popcorn genie with a turban of corn leaves and corn root earrings, a tiger, a flying magic carpet, Arabian-peaked towers and a marketplace of rugs, jars and baskets — all made of popcorn.

Popcorn royalty was perched atop the float, including Orville and Gary Redenbacher, 1992 Popcorn Queen Dawn Dutz, Popcorn Prince Rory Moore and Popcorn Princess Amy Bogue.

Another top float was built and entered by Jeffrin Lain and her mother, Virginia Novak, entitled "Magical Moments of Childhood."

The float, which won the "Judge's Choice" award, featured Novak, dressed as Mother Goose, riding on a swan (a disguised riding lawnmower) and pulling three miniature wagons. The first two wagons carried children in holiday outfits and the third was made into a bed with a tooth fairy hovering above.

The parade also had many of the traditional elements — politicians, clowns, bands, fire trucks, baton twirlers, Shriners and cheerleaders.

But forget images of prancing cheerleaders marching to the beat of school bands.

While the rest "hoofed it," all the cheerleaders representing area schools chose to ride in donated convertibles or compact pickup trucks, despite pleasant temperatures in the low 70s.

Jim and Rosemary Risk, who announced the parade, said it was their eighth year acting as emcees.

"We've seen a lot of parades over the years and like anything else, things change. This year's parade theme really lent itself to a lot of colorful floats.

"Overall, this parade seems to be one of the smoothest we've seen. It kept right on moving without too many lulls," Rosemary said.

Cheerleaders did more than ride

Vidette-Messenger reporter Philip Potempa, must have arrived at the Popcorn Festival Parade sometime after the "Reading Magically Moves Morgan" unit passed his viewing point.

People shouldn't "forget cheerleaders marching" as Mr. Potempa suggests. Nor should they believe "all the cheerleaders representing area schools chose to ride in donated convertibles."

A beautiful and entertaining group of cheerleaders from Morgan Township School exemplified cheerleading at its best as it performed some daring gymnastic maneuvers, cheered, and sang the school song.

It's too bad Mr. Potempa did not take note of such a happy exception in his observation and generalization.

R- 9/30/92

NELDA SILVA
Valparaiso

Intra-
cheerleaders

Appendix E

Voting must be civic priority

I live in Gary. I've been a bus driver for 26 years. I'm becoming very active in labor and politics.

Voting is one of my priority issues in this election. I hope all Americans become active and vote in this important election. It is time for a change. We need new (and Democratic) leadership in the White House and in the Indiana Senate.

If this happens, such issues as workplace fairness, striker replacement, and health care reform may become law.

In 1988 George Bush got 26.8 percent of the vote, Michael Dukakis got 24.3 percent and "I don't care" got 48.9 percent — the 90 million Americans who did not vote.

Register and vote on Nov. 3.

TOMMIE W. WILLIAMS
Gary

R-9/18/92

Don't base vote on one issue

Are you a one issue voter? Do you vote on only one issue like handguns, abortions, or the environment?

I used to do this until I saw the bigger picture. As a union steel worker, I will spend more than 1/3 of my adult life at work.

I have found I need to vote on issues that will protect my rights at the workplace. Issues like striker replacement, OSHA reform, trade agreements and tariffs, and health care reform.

I'm not saying the other issues are not important, only that we as the working class must put first things first.

JEFF SOPKO
Portage

R-9/19/92

Dismantling CIA should be issue

If these two gems we have running for president were sincere about morality — which seems to be the theme between the two — shouldn't they talk about dismantling the most deceitful agency and the shadow government of America, the CIA? It would definitely be a savings of untold billions but not a word about that from either one of them.

We are known worldwide as the "ugly Americans" primarily because of the CIA's deceit, duplicity and interferrence in foreign affairs, mayhem and murder from Vietnam to Iran Contra with George Bush being an intragal part of it from director to participating conduit.

This is the agency about whose creation Harry Truman was apprehensive. Its forerunner was the Office of Stategic Services (OSS). President Eisenhower also feared it and its compadres, the military and industrial complex. JFK was going to clip its wings dramatically because of the CIA ill-advised Bay of Pigs fiasco. But assassination intervened.

Jim Garrison, the then district attorney in New Orleans, was really onto something superbly relavent but the shadow government (CIA) and the Justice Department either in concert or through plain fear and intimidation were able to make a bufoon out of him through the liberal media.

Oliver Stone's movie, "JFK" was an attempt to bring the deserving truth to the American people. Why does the truth or evidence have to be suppressed and locked away for 50 or 75 years? If anyone is gullible enough to believe in Arlen Specter's "Magic bullet theory" then you are dumb enough to believe the liberal media, one of his ardent sponsors.

George Bush and the Democrat-controlled Congress have failed miserably. Bill Clinton can conceivably do worse, being a more typical government-dole Democrat, along with his backstreet affairs and questionable military patriotism.

The government can give you no more than what it takes from you. It is made up of unproductive spending bureaucratic leeches and nothing more.

ROBERT J. FADELL
Portage

R-9/19/92

Fiscal plans need discussion

Gov. Evan Bayh's refusal to discuss his fiscal plans for Indiana until he receives revenue forecast revisions in December may be good politics, but it is not good government and certainly is not statesman-like.

If voters recognize the contempt for their intelligence shown by Bayh's and Ann "DeLackey's" stonewalling, the refusal may be bad politics as well.

Twice each year state government is presented with revenue forecasts based upon nonpartisan projections of growth in the state's economy and the sales and income taxes this will produce. These forecasts come out in June and December.

In 1991, although state revenues had trailed forecast each month since June, Bayh waited until the December forecast to attempt to revise state spending to keep it in line with reduced revenue growth. Despite a flourish of fancy words and theatrical actions — such as leaving early from a December Urban League dinner in Lake County to "work on the budget problem" — the governor produced a spineless, no-brainer "across the board" (sort of) spending cut as part of his January state-of-the-state address.

The people of Indiana are entitled to know whether, if Evan Bayh is re-elected, he plans four more years of this indecisive, "decisions-may-offend-someone-an d-cost-votes" state government by reaction.

The governor already knows state revenues for the first three of six months against the most recent forecast. Do these results indicate the already massive deficit will be worse than expected? If so, how will it be handled? What kind of starting cash balance does it imply for fiscal 1993-95, and how would a re-elected Gov. Bayh handle that?

Evan Bayh is not just a candidate for governor, he is the governor. Candidates can risk saying nothing, but an incumbent seeking re-election says nothing at the risk of unemployment.

JOHN A. JOHNSON
Valparaiso

R- 9/20/92

Labor must initiate change

The American workers' dream of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is disappearing like magic ink from the Constitution.

Organized labor has always played a major role in securing the best possible benefits, wages and working conditions for our members. As a result of unions' efforts, other unorganized workers (including management) have gained as their standards of living improved.

But the past 12 years have brought about dramatic changes in the way organized labor has had to wage its fight for its members and for their survival.

Changes in labor laws have created an uneven playing field and unbalanced the power vastly in favor of management. Once unions had the ultimate and most lethal weapon on its side to bring about economic change. Now the right to strike without fear of being permanently replaced is being challenged by corporate giants.

Other agencies, like OSHA, NLRB, EPA, and EEOC also have contributed to the demise of workers' rights and to the lack of safer working conditions on the job because of limited or no penalties levied for violations.

As was stated by Barbara Jordan at the recent Democratic Convention, "It is time for change, from what to what?"

Anytime there has been major "change" in this country it has mainly come from the efforts of workers within the labor movement.

We have an obligation to ourselves, our children, and for the future direction this great nation will take. A small step is to vote on Nov. 3.

LORENZO CROWELL
Garv

R- 9/21/92

National health insurance needed

We desperately need national health insurance. I realize there could be drawbacks to that kind of insurance, but I don't know what else we can do.

Medical costs are going up by 14 percent annually, which is two-and-half times the rate of inflation. (Doctor heal thyself.) Recently we saw what soaring health care costs did to the Porter County budget.

Pharmaceutical companies are gouging us. Some years the drug companies have bigger profits than any other industry.

President Bush's health care plan is a joke. It allows about $3,800 per year in income tax credits for medical expenses.

There are two serious drawbacks to this plan. Many people do not earn enough money to owe $3,800 in income taxes per year. The other weakness is if a person has a major operation, $3,800 is not enough.

There are several Democratic health insurance plans, and all of them are better than the Republican plan.

R-9/22/92

H.J. STEINER
Chesterton

County Council needs change

This is the year to effect major changes in the Porter County Council. The senior members of this council lack even the most basic foresight and planning skills required to have anticipated and avoided the critical problems the county confronts.

Like an ongoing soap opera, each day's newspaper brings to light new wrinkles in the county budgetary crisis. Daily, council incumbents announce additional problems that have mysteriously cropped up to attack the financial integrity of our county.

Officials suggest these problems magically appeared from nowhere to sucker punch the council's best laid efforts to guide the county.

The causes underlying our crisis have been at work for more than a decade. For years, the federal government has been increasingly less willing to help localities stay financially afloat.

Remember revenue sharing? That just went away. At the same time Washington has been mandating additional programs but neglecting to appropriate the funds to pay for them.

The states, inturn, have passed the responsibility along to local governments. Add to this an increase in social problems (increasing drug use, for example, requiring more police, more courts, more jails; or the exploding rate of teenage pregnancy and its associated heavy demand on locally administered social services) and local governments are coming up dry.

Porter County's situation is not mystifying. Anyone with brains enough to read the evening newspaper would have seen the coming attractions played out in communities and counties throughout the country.

What is impossible to understand — much less forgive — is why the braintrust on the council with its years of incumbent experience was so dumbfoundedly caught flat footed.

At a special council meeting in August, Mike Bucko, manager of one of the largest businesses in the county, asked pointed questions concerning projected county revenues and expenditures.

The smoke and mirror answers offered by council members did little to obscure the fact they didn't have a clue as to how to manage a household — much less a county — on a strict budget.

For example, to those of us who work for a living it is a given you don't build a house without the assurance of a secure job and a steady paycheck.

Our council, however, is incurring millions of dollars of liabilities to build offices and courtrooms for employees and judges it can't afford to pay.

What is sad is when the dog and pony show in the newspapers is over, the council will come to the inescapable conclusion taxes will have to be raised. This is what the politicians have been saying and pushing for.

There is another alternative. It is time for a significant change in county government. A place to begin is with the incumbent members of the Porter County Council. Please vote on Nov. 3.

JOHN H. SPINKS SR.
Hebron

R-9/23/92

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Credit law needs reform, updating

Everyone has heard about the problems nagging the credit reporting industry over the past two years. The issue has awakened the national media armies from Nightline to 20/20 to special reports by seemingly every news anchor across America.

Congress is considering legislation to update federal law regulating the credit reporting industry. The bill is H.R. 3596, the Consumer Reporting Reform Act of 1992. It is the result of four congressional hearings held over two years and many months of discussion. This bill is an excellent approach to amending the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

Unfortunately, the chance of the bill's passage is slim. States that have their own version of a fair credit reporting bill, consumer groups and members of Congress want to kill the bill because it contains a provision which would prevent the passing of conflicting state credit reporting laws.

Terminating the bill for this reason would be naive, self-serving, and wrong for the following reasons:

- Credit granting and credit reporting industries have become interstate businesses. Consumers enjoy the benefits of our credit driven society that enable them to apply for, obtain, and use credit.

They carry credit cards from banks in distant states, have mortgages with companies thousands of miles away from home and use retail charge accounts issued with national companies.

Our competitive national credit system in the United States allows consumers to get lower interest rates, waived annual fees, and differing payment options. It lets consumers shop for the best credit opportunity available in the marketplace.

- The Consumer Reporting Reform Act contains more than 45 consumer protection provisions and is significantly stronger than any state credit reporting legislation. It would update the law passed 21 years ago before technology and the marketplace changed the industry dramatically.

Nothing supports the need for one uniform federal statute more than the fact the credit reporting industry has gone from 2,200 local credit bureaus ten years ago to 800 credit bureaus, many of which are supported by three nationwide credit reporting systems, (EQUIFAX, TRANS UNION, TRW.) For example, Credit Bureau Services Inc. is affiliated on the Equifax National Network and System.

- There are many instances where federal law takes precedence over state laws, especially with respect to protecting consumer rights, while conducting interstate commerce.

For instance, federal laws dealing with credit billing, debt collecting, product safety, and warranties have preemptive provisions.

Federal preemption is good for Americans when dealing with laws that need to be national in scope and that is the reason for it being in H.R. 3596.

Credit reporting is a national issue and it requires Federal legislation. If the critics of H.R. 3596 succeed in killing the bill, consumers once again have lost out to those who pursue their own special interest at the expense of everyone else.

R-9/25/92

THOMAS J. COOK,
vice president
Credit Bureau Services Inc.
Valparaiso

Keep weapons for protection

Bill O'Reilly, host of Inside Edition, advises you to give up your car and money when accosted by street car jackers.

When your government sent you to Europe, the Pacific, Korea and Vietnam, it became your moral responsibility to kill the enemy — a person unknown to you and who has no more malice against you than you have of him.

But now this same government doesn't want you to own a gun to defend yourself and your loved ones against these street apes.

Don't ever give up your weapons, your last line of defense to protect you and your family against these dregs of society.

Lawyers, the judicial system and the government protect criminal rights, but not yours. Bless the brave Korean in San Bernardino who shot the four animals holding up his business. It should be a signal to people who are bullied by these animals.

R-9/25/92

ROBERT J. FADELL
Portage

Rnr-9

Thank senators for support

I thank senators Richard Lugar and Dan Coats for their support during this time of stress with these infernal dunes expansion bills.

I thank them for holding fast on the exemption of the state Route 49 corridor and the Greco property (in Beverly Shores) from this latest attempt to get private property from private citizens.

It isn't easy being so steadfast in the face of such extreme opposition.

R-9/27/92 LOIS NICHOLSON
Chesterton

Time is ripe for change

Pope and I were on our way home one night from USX after spending 10 hours throwing bricks, carrying mortar, and breathing silica sand and graphite.

Relining blast furnaces is not easy work, but it does pay well. Both of us are in a family way and felt fortunate to have good paying jobs in a time when so many seemed to be suffering.

That gratitude became sharply acute as we approached the intersection at Highway 6 and 149 near South Haven. There we saw a hapless fellow wearing a sandwich sign stating his urgent plea, "HAVE FAMILY — WILL WORK FOR FOOD — WE ARE HUNGRY."

We understand families need to feel safe and secure. Being in a family way, we understand how much they require food, water, shelter and warmth.

Sustaining these basic needs and combining them with education and sense of belonging enables every family member to achieve some sense of self actualization. That is the family way and it is a great responsibility.

In retrospect, having been subjected to 12 years of the Reagan-Bush-Quayle agenda, I regret we did not stop and try to help that poor fellow. I really do feel kinder, gentler, hell, even docile at times. NOT!

If everything is relative, the effects of trickle down economics have left the families of this great nation malnourished and severely dehydrated. It has created a desert of opportunity and basic needs are not being met.

All of us will agree a trickle of water and crumbs of bread will not sustain a family for very long.

In the same respect, low paying jobs, welfare benefits, and unemployment checks do not enhance a family's sense of safety, security, and well-being. These are measures that keep the wolves from the door.

George Bush and the religious zealots that surround him have implied we lack something they call family values. It is rumored they talk to God, and that he really is on their side.

Give us a break, no better yet, give us a job. We are waiting for that trickle of endless pizza and sparkling fairytales that truly insults the intelligence.

This misguided economic policy has eroded the human spirit and has left less fortunate citizens lethargic, comatose, and near death. As wealth and opportunity defies gravity and floods upward and out of the country, those who labor are left with stagnant pools of water and crumbs of bread.

The Republican policies of the last 12 years has resulted in the "rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer". The disproportionate accumulation of wealth has not resulted in the creation of new industries and job opportunities for the people of this country.

Quite the contrary, they seek even cheaper labor markets in developing countries. They practice capitalism in a classic Victorian style, paying subsistence wages, utilizing child labor, and wreaking havoc on the environment. We purchase their products with our unemployment checks.

America where are you? We gathered at the well of economic opportunity only to find sand, rock, and the dried bones of others who have suffered there. How long can a family survive on a trickle of water and crumbs of bread? Not very long.

It is time to open the floodgates a little more, and let the river run so everyone can drink. We owe it to each other and to the children. The time is ripe for change. Please register and vote Nov. 3.

R 9/20/92 TIMOTHY RUE
Valparaiso

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Caught off guard by political letter

Republican, Democrat and independent candidates seeking office at all levels of government, raise money for their campaigns through various fund-raising efforts such direct mail, golf outings, hog roasts and the like. It costs money to wage an effective bid for public office.

However, when a candidate, or candidate's committee must resort to the practice of rhetorical verbiage and trickery via campaign solicitation letters, it's time to take a good hard look, and more closely examine the candidate and his/her motivation for seeking the office desired.

Having never met, talked with, or had any direct contact with Porter County commissioner candidate Michael Haughee, a letter from him thanking me for my "ideas, suggestions and assistance during the May, 1992 primary campaign," caught me off guard. I am sure it also did other prospective contributors and volunteers that received it.

I was moderately baffled by the statements because my wife, Karen, and I have publicly, privately and without a doubt, supported Republican Brian Gesse, for south district commissioner.

Karen and I have, and will continue to offer our "ideas and suggestions" to our good friend, Brian Gesse, to ensure our family and the citizens of Porter County continue to have good, honest, solid and no-nonsense representation from the south Porter County.

CHARLES W. CONOVER
R-9/30/92 Valparaiso

Questionnaire allows comment

I thank U.S. Rep. Jim Jontz, D-Monticello, for sending out the Fifth District progress report and questionaire.

I hope everybody filled them out and returned them, so he has a good sense of what we need. This gives us an opportunity to participate in the decisions made in Washington that affect us back home.

EDMUND C. HAMILTON JR.
R-9/30/92 Hebron

Can indebted nation survive?

Two score and eleven years ago our forefathers brought forth unto this country a new concept of government — deficit spending and inflation. These ideals are dedicated to the principal of spend now and pay when you can affort it.

We are engaged in a great debate, testing whether this nation or any other nation, so indebted to itself can long endure. We are also engaged in a great debate in which two aspiring candidates for president with persuasive views wish to solve this crisis. It is fitting and proper that they do so.

But in a larger sense, we cannot solve this problem overnight. The inability of our leaders to hold the line on spending and see toward the future for our children has caused and will heap untold hardships upon future generations. People will not remember what is said here but will long remember the weaknesses of our leaders to control spending.

It is rather for us to offer support for the self-conscious leaders who are trying to dedicate themselves to reality.

Be it resolved that the defeat of the country, by the leaders, and no good for the people, be forever removed from our land.

R 9/30/92 RUSSELL L. JENKINS
Wanatah

Voters poised to make mistake

At the end of World War II an ungrateful British electorate ousted Winston Churchill's Conservative Party in favor of the changes promised by the Labor (Socialist) Party. The result was economic and political decline not reversed until the election of the great Margaret Thatcher in 1979.

American voters seem poised to commit the same mistake — to desert a Republican Party which has won the Cold War, lowered federal income tax rates by 25 percent, cut inflation from 12 percent to 3 percent, cut interest rates from 21 percent to 8 percent, restored America's prestige in the world, created millions of new jobs, and given Americans economic hope that had almost disappeared during the malaise of the late 1970's.

Never mind that Democratic policies bring inflation, high taxes, high interest rates, a weak and dangerous defense and foreign policy, and promotion of the counter culture.

Americans want change so badly they may actually vote for more government, which already takes 40 percent of our national income, and less freedom and less wealth through Bill Clinton.

But that's the way with human nature. Many a story can be told of men who left their faithful wives, lured by the promises imagined in other women (or men). Now they lie dying of AIDS.

As expected, the national media, cartoonists, and opinion makers — 80 percent liberal according to surveys — viewed the Republican convention with a negative eye.

But average Americans saw the Republicans focus a great light on America's true problems. For there has been a culture war going on for some 25 years, and the attacks have come from those who hate America's traditional values.

At practically every level of American culture, the anti-religious, pro-abortion, pro-homosexual, and big government army has won. But to the credit of the Republicans there is still a party with principles written into its platform.

While many people were disappointed by George Bush's signing of the "deficit reduction" bill in 1990, Bush now stands as the little Dutch boy at the dike willing and able to stop the gush of government programs and socialist legislation which will poor from a liberal Democratic president united with a liberal Democratic Congress.

Register to vote Nov. 3 and give George Bush a Republican Congress. If you want change at least make it for the better.

R- 9/3/92 MARTIN HENRICHS
Valparaiso

Life sacred for everyone

Just because it was thousands of years ago that the Creator of mankind said, "Thou shall not kill," doesn't make it obsolete today.

God is still speaking to the hearts of those that will listen. God said He would write His laws on our hearts and impress them upon our minds. If those that support abortion on demand would simply pray and ask God what is right, there would be no great debate in this country.

No longer do pro-abortion advocates say the fetus is not a life as they did in the beginning. We know if it were not a life, there would be no need for an abortion.

I took offense at the editorial cartoon in the Sept. 12 Vidette-Messenger Opinion section that pictured the pro-life view of women as being expendable incubators.

We don't only claim life is sacred for babies but for everyone, including moms with problems. That's why the country is full of pro-life help centers with volunteers that give their time, and supporters that give their money to do everything possible to help mothers and babies.

Homes and food and medical expenses are provided for those that need it. There are people who spend hours talking with, and praying for those that enter their doors. They are also more than willing to help those that are suffering in their bodies and consciences because of past abortions.

Jesus didn't teach selective compassion. Those that listen to Him, value every life.

R-9/18/92

KATHY CROSS
Wanatah

Before calling check billing

The Chicago television stations recently have carried stories about pay phones operated by companies other than ATT that charge outrageous prices for phone calls placed at the airport.

The reporters warned people to look at the card on the phone to see if it is operated by ATT or to ask the operator the name of the company that will bill the call if they are using a calling card.

I want to reinforce that warning. When I opened my GTE bill this month, I found a charge for $26.67 for a half-hour, evening rate call from Pennsylvania to Valparaiso. I was sure it was a computor error.

I called GTE to straighten out the "error." I discovered a company called Operator Assist Network was the company that handled the call because neither my MCI nor GTE calling card had gone through from the motel room phone. These independent phone companies bill through GTE.

The GTE representative told me to call the service to dispute the billing. Although I didn't think there was much chance it would reduce the charge, I called. To my surprise, the service representative said it could give me a "one-time courtesy reduction" in my bill to the GTE rate. The refund was almost $21.

If you get a charge on your GTE bill from one of these independent phone companies, try calling 1-800-343-5244 to give you a number for the billing office of the company that over-charged and you might get the bill reduced.

R-9/22/92

BEVERLY OVERMYER
Valparaiso

Support gifted in academics

"Cooperative learning" is a hoax being perpetrated in our school system, as well as nationally. It is being tauted as the panacea for the ills of American education.

Formerly called "group work," it is students working together in groups to accomplish a learning task. It didn't work then and it's not working for our children.

Dr. John Feldheusen of the Purdue University Gifted Education Resource Institute has called cooperative learning a hoax. The research shows the opposite of what is desired occurs — weaker students are not motivated to learn by the stronger students, but tend to not work any harder at learning. They rely on the industrious students to do most of the work and then take undue credit for the group's success.

Learning does not improve or increase, but the group dynamics which occur tend to cause resentment among those who do not need group assistance in learning and those who do not put forth an effort. Educational achievement at the lower level learner does not significantly increase.

However, placing academically aggressive learners with their academically advanced peers, as seen at New York's Bedford-Stuyvesant High School, leads to the result exceeding the sum of its parts.

This is not evident among less gifted learners, nor in heterogeneous mixing of abilities. On the contrary, lower level learners do not rise to the level of the more advanced learners, but we see a regression of those at the higher levels.

Another concern is why the Valparaiso Community School System does not have a full-time, all-subject academically gifted program such as that in the Gary Public Schools, which serves as a state model site for gifted education? That program is a full K-12 program.

Certainly Valparaiso has a large number of identifiable "gifted learners" in its schools. So why doesn't it have an actual full-time program to meet the academic needs of the most able learners in all academic subjects.

We as a community can and should support the academically gifted to the extent we support our athletically and musically gifted students.

R-9/23/92

RAY RUSNAK
Valparaiso

Cable rate, rent show big increase

A few short years ago my cable TV rate was about $7 per month. It is now more than $21, a 300 percent increase.

These are areas the federal government should get involved with when people from Louisville, Ky. can stick it to us at will.

I live in Camelot Estates Mobile Home Park and our rent has more than doubled since 1985 with two out-of-state lawyers owning this park as well as 39 others.

These are the people who create inflation through their personal greed. I wish Uncle Sam would stick it to you people for a change.

ROBERT J. FADELL
Portage

R-9/23/92

55

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What are roots of anti-semitism?

As an avid reader of history books, I like to ponder questions that come down through history.

One recurring question in European history is "Where does anti-semitism come from?" The Jews are surely the most stubborn people in Christendom. They absolutely will not conform to the prevailing Christian religion in Europe and America. They cling tenaciously to their ancient Judaic religion. Give them an "A plus" for courage.

Anti-semitism comes from the Christian doctrine of "exclusiveness". The Christians believe they are the only worthwhile people in the world and all the non-Christians are basically trash.

The Christian clergy are taught this doctrine in the seminaries and go forth from there to spread the word among the laity. How anyone can want to join an "exclusive" elitist religion like this is more than I can understand.

I suppose the Jews have only themselves to blame though since this "exclusiveness" doctrine in Christianity obviously comes from the Jews own doctrine of "God's Chosen People". Talk about boomerangs.

Why don't we all embrace a loving, tolerant religion like Unitarianism or Reform Judaism? Wouldn't that be much better?

R-9/25/92 ED GUSTAFSON
Chesterton

Band tournament display of future

Listening to or reading the news, we might believe our youth have gone to the dogs and parents don't care.

Come to the Indiana Tournament of Bands this Saturday at Chesterton High School's Troy Field and see "the way things ought to be."

On that day Chesterton will have Munchkins in the Oz Festival parade and munchers along the sidewalks but pay special attention to the many high school marching bands in the parade who have come from all over the Midwest to compete in the tournament hosted by the Trojan Guard.

These thousands of young people have practiced for months in all weather extremes. They have traveled thousands of miles to compete at various locations in neighboring states. They have overcome adversities, experienced the occasional thrill of victories, and learned to deal with their defeats, just as in life.

If they perform their best, each member feels the satisfaction and pride of the accomplishment no matter how they are ranked by the judges.

For several years, I have observed the fine, young people in the Trojan Guard and in other high school marching bands and also the parents of these students and the teaching staff who work tirelessly to organize and promote the marching band experience.

The courage and excitement of the students is an inspiration for our future and the dedication of the parents and teaching staff is a credit to the spirit of involvement with our young people to work for a better future.

R-9/25/92 WILLIAM L. NIKSCH
Chesterton

Fnr-i

Law creates open season on cats

On Sept. 19 at about 8:30 a.m., two neighbors were in the street arguing about the new leash law for cats. The man said he was going to kill the cat, and the woman stated she'd not heard about the law, which doesn't surprise me as it had just been in the newspaper that morning.

To prove his point the man went over to another neighbor's house, where the cat was sitting, went onto their property and grabbed the cat by the neck.

Walking back to the street, he began swinging the cat above his head as fast as he could whirl him. The woman ran over and pushed him yelling, "Stop it, stop it, you'll hurt him." At this the man raised the cat high above his head and body slammed him to the pavement of the street.

I watched in horror as the cat lay there. He was still a second and then staggered to a crouched position. It swayed back and forth and then staggered sideways into a clump of bushes a few inches away, where it collapsed.

The woman cried, "you've hurt him" and ran off down the street. A few seconds later she returned with the cat's owners. The little girl retrieved her kitten and ran back to her house while the adults tried to hash things out.

The first word that entered my mind at this point was "spineless." I'm not trying to say the man was spineless as that would be silly. People aren't spineless. Some animals are, like jellyfish. But then I've never seen a jellyfish body slam a cat. Perhaps he would if he were 20 times the cat's size. Not to say the man's a coward either. I'm sure he'd have abused the cat if he were only 10 times the cat's size.

At this point the spineless one was telling the cat's owner the cat wasn't hurt. Everyone knows a cat is a dumb animal and totally incapable of any emotions or feelings. Or is that the neighbor? I get the two mixed up.

I later heard the cat died. Apparently the new leash law has made it open season on cats. In our neighborhood we are cat lovers. Most of us have cats. The cat in the article was fed by many of us. I have a cat myself. I will try to keep him inside but I'm terrified he'll get out and fall into the hands of the slam-dunk artist.

R-9/27/92

PAULA TAYLOR
Valparaiso

It's too early for Christmas

The other day while shopping at a local discount department store I heard a familiar but misplaced sound — Christmas music.

I followed the sound and when I found the source I was amazed to see an entire aisle full of bell ringing Santas and other Christmas decorations.

Christmas is my favorite holiday and like many other people, I like to plan ahead for the seasons shopping, decorating and other festivities. However, it's only the middle of September. My children don't even have their Halloween costumes yet. Thanksgiving is still more than two months away.

By observing the reaction of the other shoppers, I could tell most of them felt the same. It is too early. If the merchants continue to start displaying these Christmas items so early, they are going to create a lot more Scrooges. People will get annoyed at seeing these things in the stores so far ahead of time.

There is nothing wrong with planning in advance, but this is overdoing it. Let's go back to seeing Christmas decoations at a more traditional time of year. At least let us get through Halloween first.

R-9/27/92

KATHY WHITTAKER
Portage

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Please follow safety rules

I am a Valparaiso school bus driver. I ask the man who ran my bus' stop arm and pulled around my bus on the right — which is the loading side — why?

This occurred Tuesday, Sept. 23, 7:30 a.m., on the corner of Chamblee. Peachtree runs into Chamblee. He came off Peachtree.

I was waiting for a student coming up the right side of my bus. The driver of the maroon and grey mini van could not see the right side. I had my stop arm and lights activated. He surprised me by this action. He had come to a stop. Evidently I kept him too long. I could not get his license number, but I could see his face.

Next to him sat a young boy of middle school or elementary school age. What was he thinking? Had he hit the child, what would he have said?

The people in that area are friendly and courteous, as I hope I always am.

If you recognize yourself here, please be alert to us and the children we carry. Though it would not have been my fault, I would have felt responsible and never been able to forget.

Please remember we drivers can see and know where our kids are — you don't.

GLORIA EICHELBERG
R 9/28/92 Valparaiso

State should pay escapee damage

Westville Corrections and other institutions have always had a problem with criminals escaping from their custody.

These incidents have caused property damage, bodily harm, and even the death of some innocent citizens. Elderly people, and young children in our community have no real protection against these criminals when they escape.

We have formed a group called Westville Community Citizens Watch. WCCW is about as non-profit and grass roots as we can get. Everything we do is paid for by digging into our own pockets or purses. No one gets any money, or any other kind of consideration for this effort.

On the Feb. 8, two criminals left Westville Corrections. They went to the Szymczak's where they stole a pickup. Had WCCW been notified, several of our neighbors could have called the police when they saw or heard these convicts come by their homes and Szymczak's could have secured their property.

Attorney General Linley Pearson hopes we will elect him as governor. His hireling, Carita M. Hummel, has determined anyone who gets harmed by an escaped criminal has not protected himself properly, and has no reason to ask for financial recompense.

She told the Szymczaks and Rep. Mary Kay Budak they have no right to know why their claim has been denied and that it's their responsibility to hire an attorney and sue the state, "after all, they knew they lived near a prison."

The criminal is responsible, not the person who is victimized. Those who are incarcerated and who are wards of the state are not to be exonerated simply because they escaped or were released improperly.

Pearson is not only the attorney for the state, but also for the citizens of the state. Do the terms citizen, taxpayer, or VOTER have any meaning to you? Please give your constituents some serious consideration. Thank you on behalf of the Westville Community Citizens Watch.

PAUL K. BRUBAKER SR.
R- 9/29/92 Westville

Appendix F

Fishy situation on Flint Lake

E-9/21/92

JEFF MAYES
My Opinion

Anglers love to tell tales about "the one that got away," but for those who do their fishing on Flint Lake, it's the one that "won't go away."

That one is the Burlington Beach Improvement Association, a group of lakeshore landowners whose ultimate goal in life is to assure that no one, save themselves, be allowed access to "their" lake.

For years, these folks have been doing all they can to keep the general public off of this public lake:

- They convinced county officials to put up "No parking" signs near the only public boat ramp on the lake, making it exceedingly difficult to use;
- When the state Department of Natural Resources considered remedying that situation by upgrading the ramp and providing parking on the site, the group came up with a list of inane reasons to stop them from doing so;
- And after DNR backed down — probably more because this is an election year than because any of the BBIA objections were valid — the group claims to have come up with some weathered, ancient document proving the ramp is actually theirs, giving them the right to close it off.

And they say they will exercise that right on Nov. 1 by putting a fence across the road to block access to the pier.

The group's members have gone a long way in rationalizing their efforts to landlock the lake and make it their own private swimming hole:

- They say the ramp is a safety hazard because it's right next to a public beach. But if they put their fence out into the water between ramp and beach. Voila. It would eliminate the problem, which is really no problem. There has never been a documented case of an injury, nor near injury, nor accident, nor near accident caused by boaters on the site.

And if their big concern is beach safety, why close the ramp in November anyway. Surely these cold-blooded folks don't do much swimming after Halloween.

- They also say the ramp causes traffic problems. But when the DNR proposed constructing a parking lot — to eliminate traffic backups — the group would have none of it.

They said the parking lot could pose a hazard, too. With all these hazards around, it's a wonder they ever come out of their houses at all.

- They say fishermen litter and make too much noise. But if they'd take their fingers out of their ears and remove their blinders, they'd realize people on a beach are much louder than those in a fishing boat, and messier too.
- The real topper was when they claimed to have a better alternative. But that proved to be a ridiculous attempt by two local residents to make a lot of money for themselves — in land sales and property improvements — while costing the state a lot more. And it would have put the boats into the lake in almost the same "unsafe, loud, messy, hazardous spot."

Through all the bickering and charges and plotting, BBIA members kept contending they were not anti-access and would do their best to find a spot for boat access. Instead they are using this mysterious deed to seal the lake entirely.

No matter what they say, the truth is they don't want anyone on the lake, and, unfortunately, so far, county and state officials have buckled under to them.

While DNR officials, county commissioners, state legislators and city officials have espoused the need for public access to Flint Lake, they've done little or nothing to press the point, and waffled every time they get some pressure from the BBIA.

You can't really blame the state — well not much. They don't have a lot of money and they don't really care that much about Northwest Indiana anyway. As for our state legislators, they always seem to support projects in the early phases, when it makes for good news coverage or photo opportunities, but always seem to back down or disappear at crunch time.

It is the county officials who should be brought to task on the matter, however. There is no valid reason for allowing the closure of Flint Lake Gateway. It has been used safely and soundly for decades for public boating access, with the only problems lying in the imagination and egos of a few neighbors.

If the county commissioners really care about access to this lake, they should do what the state was afraid to: Condemn the land at the end of Flint Lake Gateway and create a county park, with fishing access there. If they did the condemning, they could then apply for state grant money, which has already been promised several times.

And as for all of those BBIA members who fear letting Flint Lake become public: Go jump in the lake. After all, it's yours, *as well as everyone else's.*

(Mayes is Vidette-Messenger city editor and can be contacted by calling the newsroom.)

E-9/20/92

Reader board response terrific

PASQUALE ROCCHIO
The Vidette-Messenger

(Editor's note: In these columns Pasquale Rocchio, The Vidette-Messenger managing editor, will attempt to explain some of the inner workings, policies and other mysterious goings-on at the newspaper.

If you have a question about why we do some of the things we do, or why we don't, mail or drop them off at the office, 1111 Glendale Ave., Valparaiso. Those who don't want to come to the office can call Rocchio at 462-5151.

Rocchio will try to answer the questions. If he can't he'll find someone who can.)

When we first discussed the need for a reader board at The Vidette-Messenger some members of the staff were skeptical about the response we would get.

They said people are too busy with other activities and would find little time to participate in a voluntary board dealing with the newspaper.

They're surprised.

Sept. 17 was the deadline for those interested in serving on the board to express that interest. By Friday we had received 45 responses from readers throughout our circulation area indicating an interest in serving on the board.

I'm not surprised. From the various meetings and activities I have attended I know people are interested in The Vidette-Messenger. They read it and they want it to be a vital part of Porter County and the surrounding areas.

That interest prompts criticism and compliments. I'm glad to hear both. If there were no comments, I would be worried.

What's next for the reader board? Members of the staff will go through the names and select 10 people who will represent our coverage area which extends through Porter County and into LaPorte, Jasper and Lake counties.

It will not be an easy task. With the number of responses, it may come down to a drawing for representatives of some areas.

After completing that part, we will compile a different list from which we will choose five people to serve. These people will be chosen either because of their standing in certain communities or their profession.

When the decisions are made, those chosen will be called and others will receive a letter notifying them of those chosen. We also will publish a story on the Opinion page telling who was chosen for the board.

Our first meeting will be Oct. 1 at a time yet to be decided. After that we will meet monthly for an hour to an hour and a half at the most. At the first meeting we'll probably take a short tour of the newspaper and discuss some of our goals for 1993.

A major project the board will be helping with is a redesign of the newspaper. We'll be looking at different type styles, page designs, where we put what news and what we should stop doing or start doing. We'll need much input from our readers and hope the board will help us.

Besides giving recommendations, we hope the reader board also will serve as an extension of The Vidette-Messenger in the circulation area. Members will bring reader concerns or comments into our monthly meetings.

In meetings we'll explain how an item is judged newsworthy. How and why we assign or don't assign photographs. What areas — beats — each reporter covers. What the editors do. How pages are designed and why they are designed in certain ways. The difference between advertising and news and why it is important to keep the two separate.

As they learn more about how The Vidette-Messenger operates and why we do or don't do certain things, members will be able to answer some questions from their friends or neighbors or guide inquiries to the right person.

With this and other knowledge acquired at the meetings, we also hope they'll be able to address some misconceptions our readers may have about their newspaper.

Yes, their newspaper. The Vidette-Messenger may be owned by Thomson Newspapers but it belongs to the readers. It is the daily history of their lives and that of the communities they live in.

That's why we want to involve you in what we do. We hope the reader board will help us do that. We hope it will help us make The Vidette-Messenger more valuable and a greater asset for the Porter County area.

You deserve no less.

Thank you to all those who responded to our request for volunteers. We hope you continue to be interested in your newspaper and offer your comments even if you do not serve on the board this year.

E-9/27/92

Here's election coverage plans

(Editor's note: In these columns Pasquale Rocchio, The Vidette-Messenger managing editor, will attempt to explain some of the inner workings, policies and other mysterious goings-on at the newspaper.

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PASQUALE ROCCHIO
The Vidette-Messenger

It's getting closer to election day and politics will soon shoulder aside baseball to become the topic of conversations in living rooms, kitchens, church vestibules, beauty shops and taverns across the nation.

There are two separate and distinct levels of politics — national and local. State politics float somewhere in between.

On a national level, politics is a profession whose practitioners tell us in three minutes how they're going to solve the nation's problems; fly around the nation spewing half-truths and, sometimes, outright lies; make promises everyone knows they won't keep; then ask us to trust them.

And we believe them. Not only that, but we actually clap, scream and act like crazed teenagers at a rock concert when these politicians appear in our hometowns.

In what other profession can a grown man say, "Read my lips. No new taxes;" then get elected president; raise taxes; and blame it on someone else. If one of my children did that, they'd be grounded. National politicians get away with that kind of behavior all the time.

Maybe we let them get away with it because we don't want to do it. We're so anxious for the other fellow to do it, we'll elect just about anyone.

Unless President Bush or Gov. Bill Clinton happen to stop by The Vidette-Messenger office, we depend on the national wires for our national political coverage. Our goal is to publish the top national election story every day.

It's a little easier on the state level. Many of the candidates do stop by to talk to reporters and the Associated Press in Indianapolis sends out the major state election stories.

Northwest Indiana is unique because we don't receive very much television coverage of the state campaign. But we don't have to watch those inane commercials either.

This situation makes it important for newspapers to publish as much as possible about what the candidates are doing.

We can and will do more on the second level of politics — the local election. Unlike those on the first level, people who toil in local politics actually do get things done and have some effect on our daily lives.

We know them because they are our neighbors. If we have a problem we can call them on the telephone and chew them out. Or we can accost them in the grocery store or barber shop. They have to listen.

It's important to learn as much as possible about local candidates and to vote. We're going to help you make an informed decision. Beginning Sept. 30, The Vidette-Messenger and Channel 8, along with the Porter County League of Women Voters, will play host to a series of debates between local candidates.

These will be conducted every Wednesday, with the exception of Oct. 7, through Oct. 30. The debates will be televised and reported in The Vidette-Messenger.

Also, with the help of the league, we will publish a series on local issues through a question-and-answer format on the Opinion page.

The league has mailed questions to local and state candidates. The answers are to be returned by next week and we'll begin publishing them in early October.

One of our obligations is to inform our readers of the local issues and how candidates stand on them. We'll try to pan the nuggets from the sand.

At the end of the election, we'll discuss our election coverage with members of the Reader Board, which we are in the process of selecting. We hope they — and you — will give us some insights on how to do it better.

While it is our obligation to keep you informed, it is your obligation to make an informed decision on which candidates you want to represent you on the national, state and local level.

We urge you to vote on Nov. 3.

Appendix 6

VM-9/16/92

Help don't hinder

Government should make registering, voting easier

It is no surprise Indiana has been labeled by the League of Women Voters as one of the worst states in the nation when it comes to its system of registering voters.

Indiana's registration system is confusing, cumbersome and inconvenient. Instead of making it easy for citizens to register to vote, it makes it difficult for citizens to engage in the electoral system.

For example, Sunday is the last day for field voter registration. That means people can no longer set up voter registration booths. And this is almost two months before election day.

After Sunday, people have to go to the Voter Registration Office in the County Courthouse to register during office hours. And you have to be registered 30 days before the election or you can't vote.

Congress should override President Bush's veto of the National Voter Registration Act. If it does not, Indiana's General Assembly should enact legislation making it easier for Hoosiers to register.

Those opposing easy registration say it invites fraud, but there is no evidence this has occurred to a great extent in states with more streamline registration systems than Indiana's.

In this day of voter discontent, states should work to clear the way for people to vote instead of putting roadblocks in their way.

VM 9/17/92

Common sense

Rebuild Homestead only if needed; if not, close it

While everyone wants to see federal aid go to help the people of south Florida rebuild their shattered communities, a foolish, pandering pledge by President Bush to rebuild Homestead Air Force Base goes too far.

In the shadow of a swollen federal budget deficit, Bush has asked Congress to spend $480 million to rebuild a military base which barely survived one round of base closings and could be recommended for closing by the federal base closure committee in March.

On Tuesday, the Senate voted to provide $10.5 billion to aid areas affected by Hurricane Andrew and Iniki and Typhoon Omar. That package included $92 million to clean up Homestead, but the $480 million to rebuild the base was cut by the Senate Appropriations Committee. However, supporters may fight to have it put back when members of the House and Senate meet to reconcile their different bills.

Last year, Indiana's only two military bases were ordered closed by the closure committee. Florida has 13 active military bases. Most of Homestead's mission already has been given to some of these other Florida bases.

Rep. Jim Jontz, D-Monticello, has asked that some of Homestead's duties be transferred to Grissom Air Force Base, an air base in central Indiana which is slated for closing. We believe that is a much better way to handle the situation than the option sliding around Congress.

We echo Jontz's question, "Why spend money to rebuild Homestead AFB when there are bases like Grissom all across the country that are capable of supporting Homestead AFB's mission? Why should we spend money that we are saving on base closings to keep Homestead open?"

Elections cause politicians to perform strange gyrations to get votes. Pumping $480 million to rebuild a facility only to close it would be one of the strangest.

65

80

Plenty to do VM 9/18/92

No one can complain about boredom in Porter County

If one of your children or a friend or neighbor begins to complain about being bored or that there is nothing to do in Porter County, question their sanity.

If there ever was a month with plenty to do in the county, it's September. The number and variety of events show the cultural depth and diversity of county institutions and residents.

This weekend one could travel from north to south Porter County and enjoy a full schedule of events. These include:

- The Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore's Chellberg Farm and Bailly Homestead hosts its annual Duneland Harvest Festival from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.
- The Northern Indiana Historical Power Association, in conjunction with the Porter County Convention and Tourism Bureau, is sponsoring its 16th annual Harvest Festival and Steam Show today through Sunday at Sunset Hill Farm County Park.
- Valparaiso University is sponsoring the Heritage Festival Saturday. The festival features a free blues and gospel concert from 4 to 8 p.m. on the VU Chapel's east lawn with singers of national and regional repute.
- The Northwest Indiana and Arts and Humanities Consortium is hosting "Family Programming: Building Audiences for the Next Century," a day of lively family participation Saturday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the VU campus.
- The Sons of the Union Veterans of the Civil War will sponsor "An Evening with Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln" at 8:15 p.m. Saturday at the Memorial Opera House in Valparaiso. Proceeds will go towards funding the restoration of the opera house, which celebrates its 100th birthday in 1993.
- For a day filled with good times and great food one need look no farther than the Kouts Pork Festival from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday.

There are the highlights for this weekend. They show Porter County is active and thriving, economically and culturally.

Not funny

VM-9/20/92

No humor in having to kill thousands of cats, dogs

There has been some attempt at levity recently in the Valparaiso City Council meetings. One councilman in particular had been making light of the ordinance passed Friday to require cats be leashed.

Some citizens also have chastised council members for not taking on more important issues.

We don't think it's funny and neither do the people at the Porter County Animal Shelter who had to kill 1,878 cats and dogs in 1991. The leash law is needed for cats and dogs. Those who voted for it should be commended for trying to deal with a serious problem which others have tried to belittle. Other communities should consider the same action.

This killing is necessary because irresponsible pet owners allow their unspayed or unneutered cats and dogs to roam throughout neighborhoods.

Neighbors should not have to be subjected to dogs and cats running through their yards barking, screeching or leaving messes.

In this time of tight budgets, the animal shelter should not have to spend taxpayer money searching for lost cats and dogs. City police also have more important duties than to pick up dead cats or handle reports of cat fights.

The annual budget for the animal shelter is $159,000. Over a five-year period, 20,000 pets entered and 11,700 were killed. If the animal shelter did not have to kill animals, it might be able to cut its budget.

Spaying, neutering and leashing pets will keep down the number of unwanted animals brought to the county's shelter. Don't let your pet roam and put an identifying collar on it. Be responsible and keep your pet alive.

Deserved ranking

VM-9/21/92

VU still places teaching above research dollar hunt

While college costs seem to be skyrocketing, the quality of higher education is fizzling.

Economists of all political stripes who met recently in Jackson Hole, Wyo., agreed on just one thing: The lamentable trend of U.S. higher education — sacrificing teaching for the research dollar — is good for only teachers and administrators.

There are some notable exceptions. One is here along U.S. 30 — Valparaiso University. VU again has been listed as being among the best of 558 regional colleges and universities in the country according to U.S. News and World Report's "America's Best Colleges" special report.

The ranking may be because VU finds itself swimming against the above mentioned trend.

Sightings of college teachers behind lecterns seem ever more rare. As the Hoover Institution's Martin Anderson writes in "Impostors in the Temple," many colleges and universities work a high-brow scam on students and their patrons. First, the colleges reward professors for the research dollars they bring to campus. The prof's star quality then justifies higher enrollment fees. But when students sign up for the celebrity's class, they often find it taught by a lowly graduate assistant. The Wise One himself is still priming the research pump.

We join those who foot the bills, and students in the hope VU keeps bucking the national trend and maintains its high ranking.

Arrogance VM-9/22/92

Piqued federal judges kill hope for Hammond renewal

In a display of judicial arrogance, federal judges Rudy Lozano and James T. Moody have stopped the construction of a federal building in downtown Hammond because they vowed not to move in.

We want to know why these two men should have the power to stop a public project supported by hundreds of others?

The complex, which would have housed courtrooms, judicial offices and other federal agencies was seen as a possible economic boom to downtown Hammond.

Northwest Indiana's urban centers need this kind of federal aid to bring in other businesses — which would add to the tax base — to serve those working in large complexes of this type. An eroding tax base makes it difficult for downtown areas to maintain their infrastructures and only adds to the problems which cause businesses and residents to leave.

Not only that but the hundreds of jobs which would have been created in building the complex will not be there.

Lozano and Moody said they would not move into the site when the one they wanted wasn't picked. The judges wanted a site along Interstate 94, because that would make it easier for people who live outside Hammond to use the building. It is thinking like this that has caused the decline of once-thriving urban centers.

Not only did the judges stop construction of the complex but they also caused the squandering of several million dollars which had been used to select a site in Hammond.

The actions of the two — neither of whom live in Hammond — show a lack of vision and a parochial attitude which does not bode well for Northwest Indiana. It is unfortunate the citizens of Hammond have no recourse.

Fixing 49

VM-9/23/92

County plan to keep 600N open will benefit residents

It's a good thing county officials continue to keep a close watch on state activities concerning state Route 49. There have been many problems associated with the highway since its opening, as can seen and felt on a short drive.

Many of the problems have been addressed, but only after local government officials and private citizens made noise, and recommendations.

The latest concern centers around a state Department of Transportation proposal to close or bridge-over County Road 600N. That caught the eye of county officials, who don't want to see CR 600N closed — for some very good reasons.

County officials see potential development in that area, followed by an inevitable increase in traffic flow. Growth can be controlled, but you can't stop people, businesses or industries from moving to an area they perceive as being better than the one they're in.

Three recommendations were sent to the state for keeping the intersection open. It preliminarily approved one in which 600N will cross over Route 49, with a diamond interchange for access. Keeping the intesection open will prevent traffic tie-ups at nearby intersections as development occurs.

Government must plan and prepare for development to keep it as painless as possible for residents already here. County officials are doing that by proposing to keep 600N open with a diamond interchange.

Caring Place

VM-9/24/92

Zoning Board decision puts city's quality of life first

How a community reacts to helping its less fortunate is an indication of its character.

Valparaiso showed its character again Tuesday when the Board of Zoning Appeals approved a request by The Caring Place to increase the number of shelter residents allowed by eight, from 22 to 30.

The shelter for victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse has been operating at allowed capacity since last year and has had to divert victims to motels and hotels, which is draining resources. Tuesday's decision will help the shelter to stretch its funds.

A group of neighbors came to protest the request, which is their right and obligation. They were represented by City Council member Don Larr, who presented statistics on the number of police calls in the neighborhood from Oct. 16, 1990, to July 7, 1992. The figures are meaningless since there is no comparison to the number of police calls in the two years before Oct. 16, 1990.

Larr tried to use the time-worn political red herring of fear saying neighbors are afraid of potential murders and abusers because the shelter is in their neighborhood.

The real fear is what would happen to these women if The Caring Place shelter were not available. They would be caught in a circle of abuse which has the greater potential of ending in injury or murder.

Not all neighbors are opposed to the shelter. Jim Jorgensen said "... We're proud it's there. When women are abused anywhere, we're all abused." We agree.

Government must make its decisions with enhancing a community's quality of life in mind. The Zoning Board did that Tuesday.

VM 9/25/92

Time to decide

Local officials must solve Flint Lake access problem

Government timidity has made a bad situation worse.

A reluctance by local government to decide what to do about public access to Flint Lake has prompted the Burlington Beach Improvement Association to force a decision. The BBIA has decided to fence off the ramp at the end of Flint Lake Gateway on Nov. 1.

Although we don't like its method, we can't fault it. Nothing has happened since the state Department of Natural Resources discarded a resident-sponsored plan for a boat ramp.

Flint Lake residents are angry because they don't like the present ramp site, which has been used by area boaters for 40 years. The BBIA maintains development around the lake has caused an influx of boat ramp demand. It is also concerned about congestion, lack of space, litter, noise and liability. Unless a decision is made soon, the controversy will end up in court.

But a court decision will not solve the problem of public access. The solution rests where the state tossed it six months ago, in the lap of the County Commissioners.

Flint Lake is public and should have public access. We see only one economically feasible solution. If the commissioners believe public access is important, they should do what the state wants done but won't do — condemn the land at the Flint Lake Gateway and sell it to the DNR. That agency will purchase the land and provide the access with federal funding.

Shying away from an unpopular decision has only made the situation worse. It's time for the commissioners to act.

VM-9/27/92

Search for truth

Racial harassment will end with free inquiry, diversity

Of all places where indoctrination should be shunned and debate encouraged, the college classroom is the most sacrosanct. That's why the drift toward political correctness — toward insisting that only one opinion is worth considering — has been such a thorny issue on the nation's campuses. Education is essentially a search for truth, not an endorsement of acceptable points of view.

Fortunately, it now appears the tide may be turning against attempts to prevent unfashionable opinions from being heard, especially if those opinions clash with the prevailing wisdom on racism, sexism or other sensitive subjects.

We hope Valparaiso University joins this trend and repeals any codes it has instituted which attempt to dictate who can say what about whom.

No student should be harassed or intimidated as was LeTari Thompson last year at VU. In April, Thompson discovered a burning roll of toilet paper and a cartoon bearing racial slurs outside his dormitory room. The incident came three days after a brawl between white and black students during a fraternity party.

Actions like this can be thwarted without banning foolish dialogue or tasteless talk.

Leading educators have spoken out against restrictions on campus speech, whether the restrictions are aimed at students, professors or visiting lecturers with unfashionable ideas. "Offensive and obnoxious speech is the price of freedom," says Benno Schmidt, a former president of Yale University.

In his speech during VU's annual opening convocation, university President Alan Harre outlined the best method to end harrassment without banning speech. He set VU on a path toward ethnic and national diversity.

Racism is spawned from ignorance. Ignorance cannot live where people from diverse backgrounds live, study, work and play together. Diversity brings about acceptance and an appreciation for people who are different.

Striving for diversity is not easy, but the benefits it, along with freedom of inquiry and opinion, will bring to the university and communities throughout Porter County are worth the effort.

Rising costs VM 9/28/92

Higher education should strive to get back to basics

The rapidly rising cost of college education in this country has become such a concern that the people who provide the public money are calling for professors to leave the research lab and return to the classroom.

Now, a scathing report from Congress' Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families claims that college tuition nationwide is increasing at three times the rate of inflation — outpacing health care. It says many professors teach only six to eight hours a week and that administrative costs are the most rapidly growing portion of college expenses.

The congressional report says educators equate research with institutional prestige and denigrate the value of teaching.

Research is a function of large universities. It doesn't take community college professors out of the classroom and has little impact on the smaller four-year colleges.

Still, with personnel costs being the major portion of any college budget and with public dollars being in short supply, every college should heed the admonitions of Congress. Parents having a difficult time paying tuition bills will have little patience for esoteric research projects. This may be time for higher education to get back to the basics.

Register, vote VM 9/29/92

Representative government needs citizen input to work

There's good news coming out of the Porter County Courthouse voter registration office. Registration workers say they are being swamped by forms filled out by people who want to vote Nov. 3.

That's great. In order for representative government to work, its citizens must be involved. An important part of that involvement is voting. But to vote you have to be registered and the deadline is 30 days before the election.

Apparently many residents have taken note of the deadline. There is always more interest in a presidential election but registration officials say the year may see the highest number of registrations in Porter County.

We want to acknowledge the Porter County League of Women Voters and local members of the American Association of Retired People for their registration efforts. Their booths were evident at many county events and meetings.

Despite all these efforts, if you still have not registered you can do so at the courthouse until Oct. 5. The registration office will be open 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday and until 8:30 p.m. Oct. 5 for last minute registration.

There are many important national, state and local issues which officeholders will be dealing with in the remaining years of this century. It is important citizens learn candidates' stands on these issues and then vote for candidates whose views most closely represent their own.

Your views won't matter unless you vote.

VN 9/30/92

Planning ahead

Pros, cons of economic growth must be included

Growth and development without planning can do a community more harm than good. There are many examples throughout Indiana. But the planning and goal setting must look not only at promoting growth but also at whether there are benefits and to whom those benefits will go.

For the past 10 weeks the Greater Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce has been involved in a planning and goal-setting program called Vision 2020.

Many issues were raised during the 10-week series designed to analyze factors influencing growth and economic vitality in the Valparaiso area.

Those issues and others will be examined by a 2020 Action Team which will make recommendations on goal setting.

Issues the team will look at include:

- Waste disposal
- Workforce development
- Affordable housing
- Attracting business prospects
- Development along state Route 49
- Meshing of city-county zoning ordinances
- Financing for infrastructure needs
- Where to target industrial growth
- Land-use planning

These are essential areas for study because of the past, present and future growth of Porter County. This growth already has placed some burdens on residents of Valparaiso and other communities in Porter County.

We would like to see other issues also considered. Primary is who should pay the cost of economic development? Will future residential development decrease the quality of life in Valparaiso and Porter County? Should the cost of certain development be increased to ensure present residents are not adversely affected?

Growth and development should be promoted but only if it benefits present and future residents not just those involved in development. This belief should be the touchstone by which the 2020 Action Team makes its recommendations.

Appendix H

S-9/21/92

Help save only home we have

JOHN WOLF
The Amen Corner

While Porter County wrestles with wetland and tree ordinances, nations wrestle in an attempt to avert global disaster.

About 150 nations represented by 20,000 scientists, environmentalists, diplomats and public officials recenty meet in an Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro to to build a consensus on the future of our planet.

For the first time, the United Nations sponsored conference, recognized a major change is occuring in the world. Despite many problems, the Earth Summit proved to be a new beginning for our world.

The United States missed a golden opportunity to effect "The New World Order" that President Bush has spoken about. With the end of the Cold War, the United States had an opportunity to spearhead an alliance and assert itself as the leader in the fight against depletion, pollution, famine, and, quite possibly, human extinction. We didn't.

The same conflict between environmental protection and economic development being debated in Porter County was in the arena at the Rio Conference. President Bush protested the cost in dollars and jobs and proposed a concept of "sustainable development."

His position that "growth is the key" was popular in the 1950s and 60s but has been called into question in the past decade.

The Union of Concerned Scientists says, "There is now a growing awareness that only FALSE progress comes when it is made at the expense of nature."

The USC also says, "a new understanding has arisen among the leaders of the richer nations (with the major exception, so far, of President Bush) that all our futures are inextricably linked. The "north" is beginning to learn that it cannot continue to consume the vast majority of the world's resources if the "south" is to make its contributions on population and biodiversity, which are necessary to environmental salvation."

Sadly, the Earth Summit failed to achieve any of the important agreements sought. Population control, was removed from the negotiations, largely through the influence of the Catholic Church. Other third world delegates objected to the rich industrial nations preaching to them that they need to have less children.

"As a result of President Bush's personal intervention, the global warming treaty was stripped of its most important provisions, leaving only a hollow shell," says the UCS.

A journalist friend who attended the Earth Summit writes, "Rarely has the United States been so isolated in the international political arena. In addition to the traditional conflict between the rich and poor nations, the U.S. separated itself from the other industrialized nations by refusing to sign the Biodiversity Convention and by insisting on a weakened version of the Climate Change Convention over European objections. The event was far from being a model of sustainability."

The Biodiversity treaty was the most controversial of the two-week event. Biodiversity refers to the immensely complex genetic base of plants and animals which is the unique result of millions of years of evolutionary change.

The vast majority of genetic diversity is located in the Third World. The nations of the Third World claim that biotechnological firms have stolen genetic plant material (much of it for medicines), improved this material in their laboratories, patented the changes, only to sell the new product back to them at enormous profit.

The treaty was to help slow down the rate at which species of plants and animals are disappearing as a result of encroachment of humans on their territories as well as climate change.

In the Convention on Climate Change there was a similar boycott by the United States, the world's largest producer of greenhouse gases, claiming it would hurt U.S. firms. Emission timetables and quantities were watered down to general rather than specific terms, thereby gutting the document.

Who should pay? Who should administer the funds? The conference was divided on north/south lines. The northern industrial nations were asked for 0.7 percent of their gross national profit to development aid. The European nations, Japan and the United States were unwilling.

Despite these failures, a foundation has been laid upon which a structure for saving the world can be built. There are those who feel environmental treaties are biased against economic growth. However, according to a recent Roper survey, nearly two-thirds of Americans believe economic growth and environmental protection "go hand in hand."

Environmental problems are local and regional, they are also global and can be dealt with only on a global basis. The Porter County Wetlands Ordinance and the Valparaiso Tree Ordinance are part of the whole.

When we consider that 250 million Americans consume as much energy, food, and other resources as 4 billion people in the developing world, we can understand how we have a stake in preserving a shrinking planet. It's the only home we have. Let's help save it. There is not much time left.

Amen, Until Next Monday

(Wolf, an author and retired minister, is active in many civic groups and activities)

S- 9/28/92

We must deal with rising poverty

JOHN WOLF
The Amen Corner

Neither capitalism nor communism has been able to solve the world's poverty problem. "From each according to ability, to each according to need," to paraphrase Marx's philosophy, did not seem to produce the necessities for "the needy." Out of desperation, many of the world's poor reached out to communism as a life preserver with hope for a better life.

In a visit to China in 1987, where one in four inhabitants of this planet live under communism, we were told, "no one goes hungry . . . everyone has work." However, to an American, most Chinese seem to live on the edge of poverty.

Today in capitalist America, the cliche, "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer," has been verified by fact. Poverty in rich America has reached its highest level since the '60s — 14.2 percent of the population, up from 13.5 percent the year before. That is 2 million more Americans, many of them middle class, who have been dumped into poverty. That adds up to 35.7 million Americans listed as poor.

The government counts people as poor if their income falls below $13,924 for a family of four, or $6,932 for an individual. "The trickle down" theory of economics is not working, if it ever did.

The tragedy is children make up the poorest group in America. One in four of pre-schoolers and one in five of children under 18 are poor. More than 43 percent of black children and 37.7 percent of Hispanic children are poor. To correct a popular myth, most parents of poor children do work, but a full-time minimum wage job brings a family of three up to only 72 percent of the federal poverty level.

A growing number of working parents lack health insurance or other benefits critical to their families well being. Many children in a working poor family, do not qualify for Medicaid because they are not on welfare. These are those who "fall between the cracks." More than a fourth of the poor lack health insurance. This problem is not likely to be resolved without a comprehensive national health care plan.

Where does Indiana fit in? Census figures show that in 1991, 15.7 percent of Hoosiers lived below the poverty level. That includes 288,000 children, 18.4 percent of whom are under five, living in poverty. Do you and I know any of these persons?

Perhaps so. The Vidette-Messenger reporter, Nora Rinehammer, reported in March, "the case load for the Women, Infants and Children program in the area including Porter County, rose in ten years from 500 to 4,000 cases." Nicki Giordano, director of Christian Community Action, reports "in spite of all the affluence in Porter County, we have a growing number of people who need affordable housing." Pat Hurst, of Valparaiso Community Schools, says "the number of free lunches and books has increased by "9 percent this year over last." Russ Consdorf, of Kankakee Valley Job Training says "unemployment in Porter County is 6.1 percent, that's 7,653 persons.

The news for the nation, Indiana, and Porter County is not likely to get better in 1992. Robert Greenstein, director of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a Washington research group, says, "A further substantial jump in poverty is virtually certain for 1992."

The picture is beginning to hit middle class Americans that the increase in poverty is not only a national disgrace, but a serious threat to the security of everyone. Citizens and relatives who are unemployed, are not producing goods or services or taxes. The last time so many Americans lived below the poverty line was 1964, before President Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty."

I am old enough to remember the devastation of the depression in the 1930s. Only the innovative leadership of President Franklin D. Roosevelt brought this country to its feet again. Many hated FDR for the radical changes that were made in the private sector in order to lift up "the common good." But capitalism was saved and maybe a revolution prevented. It was just that serious.

Candidates for the presidency must face the growing problem of "the poor getting poorer." How long can we ignore the 600,000 homeless on any given night in America?

A recent study by the Urban Institute showed roughly a third of them are veterans. The estimate for Indiana is 63,000 homeless, 43 percent believed to be veterans.

Poverty weights on my conscience. I am reminded most of us are people who take the Bible seriously. If you were to cut out of the Bible all references to "the poor" you would have a book full of holes. It is time we all faced up to a national and personal concern. The poor are getting poorer.

Amen, until next Monday.

(Wolf, an author and retired minister, is active in many civic groups and activities)